THE HELPER AND AMERICAN TRADE UNIONS

BY

JOHN H. ASHWORTH

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Board of University Studies of The Johns Hopkins University in Conformity with the Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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PREFACE

This monograph is the outgrowth of investigations carried on by the author while a member of the economic seminary of the Johns Hopkins University. The chief documentary sources of information have been the trade-union publications in the Johns Hopkins library. Documentary information, however, has been supplemented by personal observation and by interviews with leading trade unionists in Baltimore and with the secretaries of a number of national unions.

The author wishes to express appreciation for the invaluable assistance received from Professor Jacob H. Hollander and Professor George E. Barnett.

J. H. A.

THE HELPER AND AMERICAN TRADE UNIONS

INTRODUCTION

A "helper," as the term is used in this study, is a person employed to help the skilled journeyman or journeymen under whose supervision he works. The essential marks of a helper as here defined are two: first, he is employed to promote the work of another; second, he is supervised in his work to some extent by the mechanic whom he assists. The kind of assistance rendered and the extent of the supervision exercised vary considerably in different classes of helpers. A helper's assistance to a journeyman may be as remote as that of supplying material to another, or as immediate as that of working hand to hand with another at all times. The supervision exercised by a journeyman over a helper may extend no farther than the giving of directions as to the placing of material, or it may be so close that the helper does no work for which he is not responsible to the mechanic who is directing him.

Distinguished with respect to the nature of the work done and the relation borne to journeymen in the performance of work, helpers may be roughly divided into three classes: (1) "remote helpers," (2) "helpers proper," and (3) "advanced helpers." All or none of these classes may be found in a single trade.

(1) By a remote helper is meant an assistant who does not come into intimate contact with journeymen in the performance of work. He is, as a rule, unskilled, and is ordinarily known as a laborer. He does preparatory and subordinate work which is necessary, but which is usually not claimed by journeymen as part of the trade. In other

words, his work begins and ends with the lines marking the jurisdiction of a trade. Such a helper, on account of a close connection with journeymen while at work, must ordinarily come under the supervision of a journeyman. The hod-carrier, for example, is a helper of this class. He is a laborer who neither does nor helps to do any of the work claimed as bricklayers' work. However, the hod-carrier's work—the carrying of brick and mortar—is necessary in order that the bricklayers may proceed with their duties. As a rule, the hod-carrier is under the general supervision of a foreman, but he also receives orders from the journeymen whom he assists.

The characteristics of remote helpers differ greatly in the different trades and industries. In the building and the metal trades, where strength and endurance are required, this class of helpers is composed largely of mature men. In many industries—as the textile mills, garment factories, glass-bottle establishments, and printing offices—they are for the most part boys, often spoken of as "small help." Not infrequently it happens that these helpers are former journeymen who, on account of intemperance, an injury, or other causes, fail to secure positions requiring skill or carrying much responsibility.

(2) A helper proper is one whose work is so closely connected with that of a journeyman that it is necessary, or at least desirable, that he be under the direct supervision of a journeyman much or all of the time. This group of helpers may be subdivided into (a) helpers who assist mechanics at work some of which cannot be done by one man, and (b) helpers whose employment is wholly on account of the advantages of a division of labor and not on account of the absolute necessity of having two or more men cooperate in the performance of a single task.

(a) In many trades there is work which one man cannot do but which cannot be subdivided so that part can be done by one person and part by one or more other persons, each being independent in the performance of his particular

duties. The process is a unit and must be executed as such. Each steam fitter, for instance, must have an assistant because he cannot by himself do the physical labor of lifting and adjusting the heavy fixtures used in steam fitting. The journeyman and his helper work hand to hand, the helper acting under the orders of the steam fitter at all times. In many cases there is no clear-cut assignment of work to the helper, what he does being left to the exigency of the case and to the discretion of the journeyman whom he assists.

In other cases there is a well-defined line between the work of the helper and that of the journeyman. For example, on a quadruple printing press it is necessary to have about six men; one of them has charge of the work, while all of the others are assistants, commonly known as press assistants. Each assistant has specific work to do, but the press must be in charge of one man. Another example of this type, which is different in some respects from that of the pressman's assistant, is the helper to the elevator constructor. This helper is a kind of specialist who knows a specific part of a complex trade. He may be able in some measure to do the work of a machinist, an electrical worker, or the operator of a hydraulic press. As in the case of the printing press, it is necessary that one person have general supervision of the entire work. This person is the journeyman elevator constructor, who is master of all parts of the trade.

(b) The second group of helpers proper has arisen as a result of the advantages of a division of labor. In tile setting, for instance, the ordinary duties of the helpers are to mix the cement mortar and carry it to the tile setter, to soak the tiles when such a process is necessary, to "grout"[1] the tile work after it is finished, to clean the work off, and sometimes to cut tile when pieces are required to fit a certain space. Obviously, all this work could be done by the tile setter himself, for there is no part of it which one man is

[1] That is, fill the joints.

physically incapable of performing. In this case the helper assists a journeyman by relieving him of particular parts of a trade.

Helpers proper who are employed primarily to assist mechanics at heavy or complex work may do work which does not physically require the cooperation of two or more persons. When this occurs, the above classification to some extent breaks down. For instance, a boiler maker's helper was originally employed to assist a boiler maker in heavy lifting and in putting together the parts of a boiler. Gradually this helper has come to perform the simpler parts of boiler making. The extent to which this has taken place is indicated in an agreement between the Davenport Locomotive Company and the boiler makers of that shop. This agreement stipulates that "helpers' work shall be operating of shears, punches, drill presses, threading staybolts, attending tool room, heating on flange fires, tapping out holes for staybolts and running in staybolts, firing and testing boilers and all work helping boiler makers and boiler makers' apprentices in their various duties."[2]

(3) By advanced helper, as the term is used in this study, is meant one who does a journeyman's work but under the supervision of a journeyman. He is ordinarily a helper proper in transition to the status of a full mechanic. A helper proper assists a mechanic by relieving him of certain parts of the work of the trade or by helping him perform work which one man cannot do, while an advanced helper assists a journeyman on a particular job, often doing work exactly similar to that done by the journeyman himself. An "improver" in tile setting, for instance, is a helper proper who has been given an assistant of his own and is doing the work of a journeyman, but is usually under the supervision of a competent tile setter. In short, he is a journeyman on probation. The "junior" or improver in the plumbing and marble trades and the advanced or "helper-apprentice" in

[2] Journal of the Brotherhood of Boiler Makers and Iron Ship Builders, October, 1908, p. 726.

the blacksmiths' trade are similar to the improver in tile setting.

Some advanced helpers are of a slightly different type from that described above. The improver in the carpenters' trade, the "handy laborer" in bricklaying, and the "handy-man" in machine and boiler shops, although doing journeyman's work and using journeyman's tools, are usually confined to certain kinds of work. The chief difference between an advanced helper of this type and a helper proper whose existence is due to the advantages of a division of labor is that the former works at a higher grade of work and less directly under the supervision of journeymen than does the latter. Improvers, handy-men, and handy-laborers do not always work under the supervision of mechanics, but since they more often do, it seems proper to include them within the scope of the term "helper."

The body of helpers as here defined obviously includes all auxiliary workmen or assistants connected with a trade or industry. Inasmuch as this use of the term is not in harmony with existing practice in many trades, it is necessary to indicate the terms employed in various industries.

In certain trades the auxiliary workmen are divided into two, sometimes three, classes. For example, in a machine-shop a "laborer" sweeps the floors, carts material about the shop, removes the finished product, and performs other general work of like character. Another group of workmen called helpers are men of some skill, or at least men of some experience in a machine shop. These helpers work in closer contact with the machinists than do the laborers. They get tools for the journeymen, oil and help to operate machines, and do other work which brings them under the direct supervision of the mechanic whom they assist. Still another group of auxiliary workmen known as "handy-men" or "specialists" are employed in machine shops. "Handy-man" originally meant, as the name signifies, one who could make himself useful about a shop. Sometimes he would directly assist a mechanic, at other times he would be en-

gaged in work requiring a comparatively low degree of skill, in which case he frequently worked almost independently of any mechanic. As the work in a machine-shop became more and more diversified, the work of the handy-man became more and more specialized, until both with respect to the work which he does and the meaning attached to the term, the "handy-man" has changed to a "specialist." These three classes of auxiliary workmen—laborers, helpers, and handy-men—correspond respectively to remote helpers, helpers proper, and advanced helpers in our classification, but the first and the last of these are not included within the term helper as the machinists use it.

In boiler making, besides laborers, helpers, and handy-men, similar to workmen of the same names in the machine shops, there is another class of helpers known as "holders-on." A holder-on is a specialist who holds bolts while a boiler maker fastens them. In printing press-rooms there are three distinct classes of helpers proper, namely, "feeders," "feeders' helpers," and "press assistants." The feeder, as the name signifies, feeds the press; the feeder's helper assists the feeder in operating the automatic feeder; and the assistant pressman helps the pressman to care for and operate the press.

An illustration or two will serve to show that the term helper as the trade unions use it is vague, indefinite, and subject to frequent change in meaning. In 1910, when the United Brotherhood of Teamsters extended its jurisdiction and changed its name to the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Stablemen and Helpers, it was proposed that all garage laborers should be known as helpers, but after some discussion it was decided that they should be included in the term "stablemen."[3] In the convention of Boiler Makers in 1901 an effort was made to have the term "handy-man" substituted in the constitution for "helper." The only reason assigned for this proposed

[3] Proceedings, 1910, p. 9.

change was that the term helper caused dissatisfaction among the journeymen.[4]

Unions as a rule do not consider any workman a helper unless the work of that person falls within the jurisdiction of the trade. From the union standpoint, trade lines separate the work of laborers from that of helpers, but as these lines are more or less arbitrarily drawn and are subject to frequent change, any attempt to follow out this distinction would prove unsatisfactory. The International Union of Bricklayers and Masons, for example, does not extend its jurisdiction to the carrying of brick and mortar, and consequently does not consider the hod-carriers as helpers. In Porto Rico, however, where the bricklayers are organized under the jurisdiction of the American Federation of Labor, the trade lines are extended and the hod-carrier is considered the bricklayers' helper.

A union often defines a helper on the basis of skill and the time of service in the trade rather than with regard to the nature of the work done. In an agreement between the Electrical Workers and their employers in New York, a helper is defined as "a man who has worked at the electrical construction business more than two years, and has passed the examination provided for herein and has been admitted to the union."[5]

In accordance with such definitions, helpers are often thought of less as assistants than as those who are organized by the union under the name helper; not so much as those who do a certain kind of work, but as those whom the union permits to perform it. In other words, a helper is one who is registered by a union as a helper, regardless of the work he may do. This was impressed upon the writer when he was shown through a large locomotive shop by a machinist who pointed out a number of persons as helpers, though apparently they were assisting no one. On asking for an explanation, it was learned that these men were doing the work of

[4] Proceedings, 1901, p. 241.
[5] Annual Report, New York Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1908, Part I, p. 250.

machinists, but my guide considered them helpers because that was the grade under which the union classified them. In reading labor journals one is impressed with the frequency with which this signification is given to the term. The following from the report of Organizer Cummings of the Steam Fitters is typical: "I would have liked to tell him (Mr. Miller) just what kind of a shop he runs—one or two steam fitters and all the helpers he sees fit to put on his jobs."[6] The writer meant by this that Mr. Miller was having journeyman's work performed by men regarded by the union as helpers.

The helper must be differentiated from two other classes of workmen with whom he is frequently confused. These are (1) apprentices and (2) other subordinate workmen.

(1) With the decay of the apprentice system and the development of a helper system as a means of learning a trade, the lines of cleavage between a helper and an apprentice have become obscure in many trades.

To show the intricate relation between helpers and apprentices, let us first trace the development of the helper system of learning the plumbers' trade, which is typical of the development of the system in many other trades. In years past the greater part of a plumber's work was done in his shop, where the material was brought into shape. For the performance of the shop work, such as making lead traps, considerable skill was required, and instruction and practice in this work were necessary for one who aspired to be an efficient plumber. As the trade was remunerative, boys willingly apprenticed themselves to the master plumbers and worked for little pay apart from the instruction received. These boys were primarily learners and incidentally they assisted in the shops where they worked.

Gradually a change took place. As plumbers' work increased in volume, the amount of shop work to be done decreased relatively to the entire work. Large manufacturing establishments began to make, ready for use, every article

[6] The Steam Fitter, May, 1908, p. 5.

needed in the plumbing trade. Since these articles were made in uniform sizes, plumbing became largely a matter of putting them together properly. Previous to the falling off of the shop work the boys and men hired to carry the tools and the material needed on a job and to render such assistance as the plumbers might require, had little opportunity to become practical plumbers and were clearly distinguished from the apprentices. When the shop work largely disappeared, it became the chief duty of the apprentice, as it was of the helper, to assist plumbers on construction work. Thus, the boy employed as a helper and the one under contract to be taught the trade were placed at identically the same kind of work and received about the same amount of instruction. Not only did the apprentice become a helper, but also the helper became a learner of the trade. This was due to the fact that a helper could not render the assistance required of him unless he received some instruction in his work. Besides, he had the same opportunities as the apprentice to observe the work of the skilled journeymen. On account of the change in the character of the work in the plumbing trade the helper and the apprentice came to have two qualities in common, namely, both were assistants and both were learners of the trade.

When it became possible for boys to learn the plumbing trade while serving as helpers, they naturally preferred not to enter into an apprentice contract. Since it was customary for each plumber to demand a helper,[7] the boys who wished to learn the trade felt fairly sure of an opportunity to do so without being subject to the restrictions and the low wages imposed by the customary apprentice contract. In the course of time a majority of those learning to be plumbers were in fact, if not in name, helpers and not apprentices.

As long as the helpers could not learn the trade the journeymen made no objections to their employment. In fact, journeymen often refused to work without helpers because

[7] Plumbers, Gas and Steam Fitters' Official Journal, December, 1908, p. 10.

they wished to be relieved of rough, unskilled work. It was not long, however, before the plumbers became convinced that the helper system unless restricted would produce an excessive number of plumbers. The United Association of Plumbers became aroused, and undertook to check the use of helpers. At first it was their policy to distinguish clearly the apprentice from the helper, to limit the number and the promotion of the apprentices, and to do away with the helpers.[8] When this policy failed to accomplish the end desired, it was abandoned, and a plan was adopted which involved a complete reversal of former tactics. This new policy undertook to bring the helper within the scope of the apprentice regulations.[9] The helper was declared to be an apprentice, and if the number of apprentices and helpers employed by any firm exceeded the number of apprentices allowed the firm by the union, it was considered a violation of the apprentice regulations.

Sometimes the Plumbers, instead of using the terms helper and apprentice synonymously, include the helper within the term apprentice. John S. Kelly, president of the Plumbers, Gas, Steam and Hot Water Fitters, when asked for how long a term of service an apprentice must be taken, replied: "Four years as a helper and two years working under instructions."[10] One clause in an agreement between the master plumbers and the journeymen plumbers of Chicago in 1908 states that the term of apprenticeship shall be five years, three years as helper and two years with tools.

Confusion in the use of the terms helper and apprentice is characteristic of practically all the skilled trades in which helpers have opportunities to become craftsmen and in which the unions seek to maintain apprentice regulations. The results have, however, not been the same in all trades. With the Electrical Workers and the Elevator Constructors the attempt to distinguish between the two has resulted in a peculiar use of the terms. The constitution of the Electrical

[8] Constitution, 1897, p. 25.
[9] Proceedings, 1899, p. 26.
[10] Report of U. S. Industrial Commission, vol. vii, p. 966.

Workers, Local Union Number 28 of Baltimore, provides that the period of apprenticeship shall be two years and that an apprentice shall become a helper at the end of the second year.[11] An agreement between the Electrical Workers, Local Union Number 3, and their employers describes a helper as a man who has passed an examination for work specified by the union and has worked at the trade two years, while an apprentice is defined as a boy registered by the union, who is employed to do errands, carry material to or on the job, attend lockers, or assist journeymen in testing. This agreement further states that apprentices must not encroach on the work of the helper or work with tools.[12]

In some localities the Blacksmiths and the Boiler Makers have sought to remedy the confusion growing out of the terms helper and apprentice by adopting a new term, "helper-apprentice." This term is applied to those helpers who are recognized as learners by being promoted to advanced work. This serves to distinguish them, on the one hand, from the helpers who have not been promoted, and, on the other hand, from the regularly indentured apprentices. It is stipulated in an agreement between the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway Company and the boiler makers of that road that there shall be two classes of apprentices—regular apprentices and helper-apprentices. The former are to be between sixteen and twenty-one and the latter between twenty-one and twenty-six years of age. It is further agreed that helper-apprentices must have previously served the company for two years as helpers and shall serve in the capacity of helper-apprentices for three years, while regular apprentices shall serve for four years before being promoted to journeymanship.[13]

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[11] Constitution, 1910, p. 12.

[12] Annual Report, New York Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1908, Part I, p. 249. This distinction between helpers and apprentices is not observed by electrical workers in all localities. In some places the two terms are regarded as synonymous. Thus in an agreement at Binghamton, New York, it is provided that an apprentice or helper shall serve three years at the electrical business before he shall be allowed to become a journeyman.

[13] Journal of the Brotherhood of Boiler Makers and Iron Ship Builders, March, 1910, p. 167.

A similar agreement between the Blacksmiths and the Texas and Pacific Railway Company provides that helpers are to be advanced to the position of helper-apprentices, and that one helper-apprentice shall be allowed in each shop and one additional for every five blacksmiths employed.[14] In other localities the workmen corresponding to the helper-apprentices are known as advanced helpers. For example, an agreement between the blacksmiths and the Canadian Pacific Railway Company provides that a helper shall be allowed to take a fire after two years' service and shall be called an advanced helper.[15]

The tile layers sometimes use the term helper-apprentice to designate one who has passed through the lower stages as a helper and is advancing to the ranks of the mechanics. An apprentice system outlined for tile layers in Milwaukee declares that the apprentice is to be known as the helper-apprentice. His duties are to be the same as those of an ordinary helper, except that he is to be allowed to do certain mechanical work and, where the trade demands it, journeyman's work at journeyman's wages.[16]

The failure on the part of labor unions to distinguish the helper from the apprentice, and especially the tendency of unions to class as apprentices all learners of a trade, have led investigators to overlook the real distinction between the two classes of workmen. For instance, Dr. J. M. Motley, in his monograph, "Apprenticeship in American Trade Unions," quotes from the Iron Molders' Journal as follows: "These berkshires were a peculiar institution. They were boys employed by molders to assist them at their work, nominally as helpers, but in reality they were apprentices, and every molder had to use at least one of them."[17] Dr. Motley accepts this statement as correct, and treats the berkshires as apprentices, though they were really helpers. They assisted the molder at his work and were under his

[14] Blacksmiths' Journal, January, 1907, p. 23.
[15] Ibid., March, 1907, p. 20.
[16] Tile Layers and Helpers' Journal, April, 1907, p. 20.
[17] Johns Hopkins University Studies, ser. xxv, nos. 11–12, p. 22.

direct supervision at all times. The only sense in which they were apprentices was that they were learners of the trade.

Dr. Walter E. Weyl and Dr. A. M. Sakolski, in their study entitled "Conditions of Entrance to the Principal Trades," give warning that "the laborer known as the 'helper' must not be confounded with the apprentice," and then proceed to distinguish the two groups. "The latter [apprentice]," they say, "is generally a youth undergoing a training to become a journeyman. He uses a journeyman's tools and is in most trades permitted to do a journeyman's work. The helper, however, except in a very few trades, receives no instruction and is restricted to certain kinds of unskilled employment. As we have already pointed out, he is not allowed to use the journeyman's tools, and in many trades is not under the jurisdiction of the journeyman's union."[18]

Such broad generalities evade rather than solve the question involved. This confusion is doubtless due to an effort to conform to union usage, which is not at all uniform. Even if judged from that standpoint, the above distinctions are far from correct. In the first place, there is an apparent assumption that helpers are more advanced in age than are apprentices. According to union regulations, apprentices are often taken from the ranks of the helpers, and are therefore older than the helpers. The Boiler Makers and the Machinists provide that as many as fifty per cent of the apprentices may be taken from the ranks of the helpers,[19] and the Printing Pressmen require that all the apprentices be taken from the assistants.[20] In many other trades it is the policy of the unions to have the apprentices drawn from those employed as helpers.

In the second place, helpers are not, as a rule, restricted to unskilled work, but are allowed to pass gradually from the position of an unskilled laborer to that of a mechanic. As

[18] Bulletin, U. S. Bureau of Labor, no. 67, November, 1906, p. 768.
[19] Constitution, 1908, art. iii, sec. 1; International Association of Machinists, Official Circular, no. 36, 1913.
[20] Constitution and By-laws, 1903, art. iii, sec. 1.

will be shown in a later chapter, the unions in a large majority of the skilled trades now permit helpers to progress in their work. In the third place, the distinction based on the kind of tools used is unsatisfactory. In a few trades like stone-cutting and bricklaying the helpers are prohibited from using tools. There are other trades, such as steamfitting, where the helpers do not have tools of their own, but frequently use those of the journeymen with whom they work in order that they may render the assistance required of them. Finally, the criterion of union jurisdiction is invalid, since practically all unions now extend their jurisdiction over both helpers and apprentices.

Dr. Weyl and Dr. Sakolski also state that "the essential distinctions between this [helper] system of promotion and that of apprenticeship are that no formal instructions are given the 'helper' and no definite period of training is required."[21] The same criticism also applies here. Helpers, in order that they may execute their work, must be given some instruction, though it may not be given with a view to making the helper a mechanic. Moreover, in certain trades where the unions make no provision for apprentices—unless helpers are considered apprentices—journeymen are supposed to give helpers instruction. Finally, as to a definite period of training, with the exception of the Elevator Constructors and the Blacksmiths not a single instance has been found where a union representing a skilled handicraft has made provision for helpers to become mechanics without specifying the time they are to serve as helpers. A typical case is the requirement of the Steam Fitters that "Helpers transfering to a Fitters local branch will be required to show that they have worked at least five years at the trade."[22]

Since all these distinctions are inadequate, resort to definition is again necessary in order to obtain our bearings for future discussion. A helper has been described for guidance in this study as any person employed to help the skilled journeyman or journeymen under whose supervision he

[21] Bulletin, U. S. Bureau of Labor, no. 67, November, 1906, p. 712.
[22] Constitution, 1908, sec. 39.

works. On the other hand, an apprentice is one who, by promise, indenture, or covenant, for a specified time, is being taught the trade by a master of the trade or some one in his employ. The only essential distinction between the two classes according to these definitions lies in the purpose of employment. The helper, though he may be a learner of a trade, is primarily employed because he supplies an economic need, and in fixing his wages nothing is deducted for instruction given. On the other hand, an apprentice may assist a journeyman, but the primary purpose for which he is engaged is that he may be taught the trade, though he may incidentally supply an economic need.

(2) In large manufacturing establishments, owing to the minute division of labor, there are many occupations, and consequently many classes of journeymen, some of whom are subordinate in rank to others. It now remains to distinguish a subordinate workman who is a helper from one who is not a helper. Dr. Weyl and Dr. Sakolski in the study previously referred to say: "Progression within a trade permits a boy to move from the simpler to the more complex operations at a rate commensurate with his diligence and dexterity, thus giving those who have extraordinary ability or who apply themselves earnestly to their work an opportunity to pass rapidly through the various stages of apprenticeship. Consequently the so-called 'helper system' of entrance to a trade, as we shall explain later, is more adapted to modern conditions than the apprenticeship system. By the 'helper system' is meant the process of 'moving up' the person desiring to become a proficient mechanic in a trade or occupation. The 'helper' as a beginner does the simpler kinds of work, but as he gains experience he gradually acquires sufficient application and proficiency to enable him to work upon the more complex processes of the craft."[23]

Evidently the writers of the above have failed to discern one of the essential marks of a helper, which is his subjec-

[23] Bulletin, U. S. Bureau of Labor, no. 67, November, 1906, p. 712.

tion, to some extent, to the authority of a fellow-workman. Since certain industries are composed of several branches or trades wherein are many laborers who are subordinate in rank to other workmen, but who are not in any way under their supervision and who are gradually promoted to higher positions, it is obviously incorrect, or at least misleading, to term the helper system a "moving up" process.

The distinction between a helper and a workman who progresses from one of the lower to one of the higher trades of an industry composed of several branches or trades can be best shown by a comparison of these two classes of workmen as they appear in two different trades. In the pottery industry a "jiggerman," for instance, contracts to do work at so much a dozen pieces. Instead of doing all the work of making the finished product himself, he operates a jigger—a machine for shaping and pressing the articles manufactured. A "batter-out" cuts off the clay, flattens it, and places it on the mold so that the jiggerman can proceed with his work. A "mold-runner" takes the molds containing the green ware from the jiggerman and carries them to the dry room, and later, after removing the ware, he brings the molds to the batter-out for use again. These subordinate workmen, the batter-out and the mold-runner, are helpers to the jiggerman, for they assist him at work considered as a unit, are under his supervision, and are responsible to him for the proper performance of their respective duties.

In the manufacture of boots and shoes the different processes are not considered a unit. Piece work is done, but by the piece is meant the performance of a single operation rather than the production of a completed article. All workmen are hired by the firm and are responsible in no way one to another. Cutting, fitting and shaping, finishing and treeing are processes independent of each other. A person engaged in one of these operations is in no sense a helper to one performing a different operation. In both the pottery and the boot and shoe industry there is a moving up of the brightest and most capable workmen. In one case those moved up are helpers, in the other case they are not.

The policies of organized artisans with reference to helpers vary widely according to the different conditions in the different trades and according to the particular class of helpers under consideration. For convenience and clearness in presentation, union policies and questions connected therewith will be discussed in separate chapters under the following heads: (1) the uses of the helper; (2) the hiring and compensation of the helper; (3) the organization of the helper; (4) the helper and trade-union policy.

CHAPTER I

The Uses of the Helper

The remote helper, as defined above, ordinarily receives little attention from the unions representing the more skilled trades, with respect either to employment or promotion. This is due to the fact that the unions and the employers are in agreement as to the functions of this particular class of helpers. The unions favor their employment because it relieves the mechanic of unskilled and ofttimes arduous labor without working any immediate harm to the union. The employers wish to use these helpers for the very simple reason that it is more economical to have low-grade work performed by a cheap class of workmen than by high-priced mechanics. Especially is this true of those trades in which the mechanic by working alone would lose much time in changing from one kind of work to another, or would cause expensive machinery to stand idle. In fact, by tacit consent of the unions and the employers the use of the remote helpers has been so regulated that there has been little necessity for specific union rules. For example, the hod-carrier is such a well-established factor in supplying the bricklayer with material, and so seldom shows any disposition to become a bricklayer, that the question concerning his employment or non-employment does not even arise. The bricklayer would not for a moment think of carrying his own brick and mortar, nor would the contractor think of allowing him to do so. The rarity of the instances in which this group of workmen are referred to in union conventions and in labor periodicals attests their insignificance as a union problem.

However, in a few trades where there is a tendency for the remote helper to encroach upon the work of the journeymen

there is union opposition to his employment. Thus in New York City, for a period prior to the year 1903, owing to the fact that there had been so much trouble over helpers of all classes, the plumbers' union insisted that journeymen plumbers should carry all fixtures to their place of erection regardless of the number of floors such fixtures had to be carried.[1] It has been the policy of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners to minimize the number of laborers on any job. This is partly due to the fact that the carpenter, in many instances, can better select the material which he needs for a specific purpose. The main reason, no doubt, is that the use of helpers tends to develop "saw and hammer carpenters," whose presence in large numbers decreases the demand for skilled carpenters and is a source of no little trouble to the union.

The explanation as to why the remote helper is more likely to encroach upon the work of the carpenter than upon the work of the bricklayer lies in the fact that the duties of the carpenter and the carpenter's laborers are more diversified than are the duties of the bricklayer and the hod-carrier. Where the work of this class of helpers, as well as the work of the mechanic, is specific there is less danger that such helpers will make inroads upon the work of the craftsman than there is in trades where the duties of each class cannot be so definitely outlined.

Some unions which represent an industry rather than a trade embrace within their ranks all the workmen of the industry, both skilled and unskilled. In such cases the remote helper, while a member having equal rights and privileges with more advanced workmen, is not a factor of special concern. Thus, the general help about a mine, a carriage and wagon factory, and many other similar establishments, while numerous, does not figure prominently as a distinct group of workmen which calls for special union regulation.

Union policies with reference to the employment and the

[1] Annual Report, New York Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1908, Part I, p. 262.

promotion of the helpers proper[2] are far from uniform in the different trades. This lack of uniformity is due, as in the case of the remote helper, to the fact that the employment of helpers is more inimical to the welfare of the journeymen in some trades than in others. Unions may be divided into three general classes: (1) unions which demand the employment of helpers; (2) unions which are practically indifferent as to the employment and promotion of helpers, and leave the matter entirely in the hands of the employers; and (3) unions which recognize evils in the helper system, and either try to abolish it or place strict limitations upon the employment and activities of helpers.

(1) In a few trades where the nature of the work is such that helpers lighten materially the physical duties of journeymen without threatening positions or wages, the employment of helpers is not only encouraged, but is often demanded by the unions. For example, a teamster has much harder work to perform when working alone than when he is supplied with a helper who, under his direction, does a large part of the loading, unloading, and carrying of heavy material, and performs other manual drudgery. The driver of an ice wagon keeps the accounts with his customers and attends to all other business matters connected immediately with the distribution of ice. In short, he is a business go-between for the employer and the customers. In addition to the driving of the team, the driver also does other manual labor, such as the blocking out of the ice, but the carrying of the ice from the wagon to the customers is usually done by the helper. This helper, while assisting the driver, readily learns traffic rules, location of streets, and the names of customers. Consequently, if his personal characteristics and his business and educational qualifications are suitable, he is soon capable of becoming a driver.

Two facts, however, keep the teamster's helper from being regarded as a menace by the driver. In the first place, there are many other persons besides helpers who could

[2] In the remainder of this study the term helper is used in the sense of helper proper.

readily take charge of teams if there should be a disagreement between an employer and his drivers. In the second place, many helpers are negroes or illiterate white men, whose lack of qualifications keeps them from becoming teamsters. Naturally, then, the teamsters desire helpers, for by using them they have much to gain and little to lose. Because of the great diversity in the number of helpers needed by the teamsters connected with different industries, the national union has no rule as to the number of helpers which shall be furnished. It is the policy of local unions to demand helpers in sufficient numbers that the drivers may not be burdened with excessive physical labors. Moreover, as already indicated, the Teamsters, while favoring the promotion of helpers to fill vacancies in the ranks of the drivers, do not maintain any definite policy as to this, the matter of promotion being left entirely to the employers.

In certain industries where many grades of workmen are employed, and where anything approaching an apprentice system would be impracticable, the unions favor the employment and the promotion of helpers. For instance, in certain branches of the iron and steel industry the men work in teams composed of a definite number of workmen of whom the "underhands" are helpers.[3] In addition to these regular helpers, the union often demands that extra help be furnished for work which is especially heavy. Thus, Local Lodge Number 84 of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers demanded that "help be given to heaters and catchers on all piles weighing 160 lbs. and upward."[4] Similarly, Local Union Number 13 asked that "when working blooms or piles weighing 275 lbs. and over, on muck mills, the firm shall furnish extra help for hooking and straightening."[5] It is the desire of the leaders of the Iron, Steel and Tin Workers that helpers be promoted in regular order according to time of service, provided the

[3] Proceedings, Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, 1877, p. 30.
[4] Program, 1889, p. 17.
[5] Ibid., p. 20.

skill and capabilities of those longest in service justify such promotion. However, no definite stand has been taken by the association on the question of promotions since the early days of the union. Advancement of workmen is for the most part left to the employers. The work of the helper is, when possible, made very definite, but this is not done to hamper in any way his opportunities to secure a higher position, but rather to make all work more systematic, and thus avoid confusion and misunderstandings.[6]

It is the common experience that helpers are a source of trouble in unions which seek to enforce an apprentice system. This is because a helper proper who works in close contact with a mechanic learns the work of the one whom he assists and thus comes into conflict with the apprentice regulations. Consequently such unions are more or less hostile to the unlimited employment of helpers. There are, however, some exceptions. For instance, in the blowing of glass bottles it is understood that blowers shall be supplied with a "mold boy" and a "cleaner-off." The mold boy operates the molds into which the glass is blown, and the cleaner-off removes the particles of glass that adhere to the blower's rod. The intimate relation of these helpers to the blowers does not give them any considerable insight into the art of glass-bottle blowing, because the blowing process requires muscular movements which are invisible and consequently can be learned only by actually doing the work. The chasm between the blower and the helper is so broad that the helper cannot cross it at a single leap, nor can the process of blowing be divided so as to afford stepping-

[6] Thus in the Proceedings of the Fifteenth Convention, p. 2974, the work of the melter's helpers is outlined as follows: "The first helper shall help charge, make bottoms, clean and sharpen bars, help dig out tapping hole, tend gas and reverse furnace as often as directed by melter. First helper shall assist second helper at the top hole when closing.

"The second helper shall bring in ore, help charge, help dig out top hole, clean and close tapping hole, bring in and properly prepare ferro manganese, and bring in limestone, clean and sharpen bars and see that furnace tools are taken care of. He shall take any ore and manganese left from heat back to their bins, also keep the charging floor swept clean around middle front door."

stones on which he can cross. Accordingly, the bottle blowers do not oppose the use of helpers, nor do they, as a rule, lay down specific regulations as to the work of the helper. Doubtless another reason for the attitude of the bottle blowers with respect to their helpers is the fact that they work by the piece. If they themselves should do all the low-grade work, such as operating the molds and cleaning the pipes, it would tend to decrease their earnings. It would be difficult to maintain, for the entire process of making bottles, a standard rate as high proportionally as is maintained for the skilled process of blowing.

Just as it is to the interest of the blowers to have helpers, so it is to the interest of the employers, as long as blowers are plentiful and the standard rate is maintained, not to put on blowers who are inexperienced, for owing to the slowness of an unskilled blower and to the fact that he turns out many faulty bottles, the employer, by putting on his helpers as blowers at the standard rate, would get smaller returns for the wages paid to such helpers working as blowers. This is because the helpers as well as the blowers would waste time in making many worthless bottles. Since a helper's pace is set by the blower whom he assists, it is to an employer's interest to use the best blowers obtainable. Consequently, although the blowers do not allow the promotion of any helpers other than those who become regular apprentices, no difficulty is experienced in maintaining the rule.

(2) The industries represented by the unions which are comparatively indifferent to the employment and the promotion of helpers include industries in which many grades of laborers are employed. In such industries, on account of the multiplicity of occupations and the constant change brought about by the introduction of new machinery, occupational lines are not tightly drawn, and the unions give their attention to other issues, leaving largely to the employers all questions pertaining to the division of work and the employment and promotion of workmen. Consequently,

though helpers are employed, no friction is generated thereby, and their existence is scarcely recognized in the union journals and convention proceedings. For example, the Western Federation of Miners makes eligible for membership "all persons working in and around the mines, mills and smelters. . . ."[7] In this list of workmen are many classes of helpers, such as trackman's helper, blacksmith's helper, and smelter's helper. Yet from reading the constitution of this union, one would not know of their existence.

(3) The unions in which the questions relating to the employment and activities of helpers have been of the greatest concern and in which there has been more or less action designed either to abolish the system or to restrict the number and advancement of helpers are the following: Blacksmiths, Boiler Makers, Elevator Constructors, Electrical Workers, some branches of the Glass Workers, the Iron Molders, Machinists, Printing Pressmen, Plumbers, Potters, Sheet Metal Workers, Steam Fitters, and Tile Layers. Before taking up the specific policies of these unions it will be well to consider from the union standpoint some of the more characteristic evils growing out of the use of helpers. The chief objections to the existence of a helper class in these trades may be summed up in a single sentence: Helpers are conducive to the disintegration and the overcrowding of a trade.

In the first place, the presence of a helper class in a trade produces or accelerates trade disintegration. It has been the policy of a majority of the unions enumerated above to hold their respective trades intact, and to oppose any grading of work or workmen. The employment of helpers is not favorable to this policy. The introduction of machinery and of machine-made articles has been the great factor in destroying the unity of trades, but the presence of helpers has made possible a grading of workmen. When a division of work is introduced, and there is a class of men

[7] Constitution, art. i, sec. 1.

competent to take over the less skilled parts of it, the employers will naturally favor such a division. On the other hand, if there are no men in the shop, and especially if there are none connected with the trade except full-fledged mechanics and a limited number of apprentices, it is probable that the union will be able to enforce its demand that the trade shall be held intact, or at least that all the work shall be done by those recognized by the union as full mechanics or as apprentices. The helper proper and the advanced helper would be in a good position to step in and take work which the mechanics claim should be done by mechanics only.

There is this same tendency, so the unions claim, for helpers to encroach upon the rights of journeymen where the work is made up of jobs scattered here and there which require varying degrees of skill. If there is a job of work which a helper can do, a helper rather than a mechanic is sent to do it. Such a policy, if unrestricted, gradually destroys the unity of a trade. From many sources come complaints that this infringement upon the rights of the journeymen is going on. The Blacksmiths, the Boiler Makers, the Machinists, and the Plumbers have had grievances of this kind. President Kelly of the International Association of Plumbers, Gas and Steam Fitters has declared that contractors send jobbers out when they get knowledge enough to do the work. While they could not lay out systems, they can put in closets; and while employers pay them at the rate of six dollars a week, they charge the customers as much for these men as though they had worked fifteen or twenty years at the business.[8]

The unions contend that trade disintegration is responsible for the production of poor mechanics, or, at least, of workmen who can work at only certain parts of the trade. The baneful effects of the helper system in this respect are strongly set forth in the report of Organizer Burke to the

[8] Report of U. S. Industrial Commission, vol. vii, pp. 970–971.

Plumbers' Convention in 1908. Mr. Burke said that of about four thousand men in Philadelphia engaged in the plumbing and pipe-fitting industry, only about twenty-five per cent were capable of qualifying for admission to the union. Many of them, particularly those about shipyards and locomotive works, were handy-men, who could do one class of work only. Many others worked on hydrants and did street work, but were not skilled workmen.[9] In a similar report of the same year he ascribed like conditions in Harrisburg and other places to the helper system.[10]

It is further contended by union journeymen that the use of helpers in a trade produces a number of poorly trained mechanics far in excess of the demands of the trade. If each mechanic in a trade works with a helper, and if each helper becomes, as he will in most instances, a poor mechanic, the result is extremely annoying to those having at heart the welfare of their craft. The journeymen tend to increase in a ratio exceeding the needs of the trade. Unemployment, low wages, and a depressed trade class are the pernicious results of such a system. In many of the skilled trades this is a stock argument against the unlimited use of helpers. In fact, scarcely an article treating this subject can be found in any labor journal wherein the warning does not appear that the employment of helpers, if unrestricted by the unions, will inevitably produce a surplus of workmen and thus enable the employers to break down the union regulations.

As can be readily seen, these two evils growing out of the presence of a helper class react upon each other. Trade disintegration creates a demand for more helpers and provides a way for them to become journeymen, thus producing a surplus. Similarly, a surplus of journeymen, especially of unskilled ones, materially aids the employers in any effort to divide work and workmen into classes, perhaps largely independent of each other. Formerly, to be a boiler maker,

[9] Plumbers, Gas and Steam Fitters' Journal, June, 1908, p. 8.
[10] Ibid., December, 1908, p. 10.

a blacksmith, or a machinist meant a definite thing; but now, to be classed as a member of any one of these trades may mean being engaged at any one of many occupations into which each of these trades is divided. For instance, nearly a page in the constitution of the Boiler Makers is devoted to an enumeration of the work falling within the jurisdiction of the Boiler Makers,[11] yet it is a significant fact that a boiler maker usually devotes his time to one, or at least to a very few, of these enumerated occupations.

Even if there were in ordinary times no desire on the part of the employers either to promote helpers or to have them undertake work claimed by mechanics, their presence at certain seasons is likely to prove a menace to the welfare of the journeymen. In times both of slack trade and of trouble with employers the substitution of helpers for mechanics is a standard grievance. "When the times get slack," said the president of the United Plumbers, "they [the employers] are laying off the journeymen and keeping the boys."[12] Instances where helpers took the place of journeymen during strikes are numerous. For example, when Local Union Number 24 of the International Association of Marble Workers went on strike in 1907, the places were taken by the helpers,[13] even though these helpers were members of the international association. The desire of helpers to do advanced work when an opportunity presents itself is hard to overcome, and this makes it more difficult for the mechanics to enforce their demands.

Two general policies have been followed by organized journeymen in their endeavors either to mitigate or to eradicate the evils discussed above. These are (1) the restriction of the helper, and (2) the abolition of the helper.

(1) Various regulations designed to restrict the helper have been tried either by different unions or by single unions at different times. For our purpose, such restrictive policies may be classified as (a) absolute and (b) modified.

[11] Subordinate Lodge Constitution, 1912, art. iii, sec. 3.
[12] Report of U. S. Industrial Commission, vol. vii, pp. 970–971.
[13] The Marble Worker, April, 1907, p. 20.

By the former is meant the circumscribing of the work of the helper within certain bounds beyond which he is never to go under any circumstances. By the latter is meant the policy of allowing helpers to be advanced in their work according to certain clearly defined rules or regulations. These two policies will now be taken up in order.

(a) In many of the older trades, in which for generations well-established apprenticeship systems existed and apprentice regulations attained such sanctity in the eyes of the journeymen that to violate them was an odious act, the policy of absolute restriction characterized the first efforts of the unions in their endeavors to check the encroachment of the helpers. The idea seemed to be to preserve the apprentice rules in their original purity. If helpers were to be allowed at all, it must be on condition that they remain continuously as helpers at work known as helpers' work. Prominent among the unions which have tried for longer or shorter periods to maintain this policy are the Blacksmiths, Boiler Makers, Iron Molders, Machinists, Marble Workers, Plumbers, Sheet Metal Workers, and Tile Layers. The following are typical examples of rules restricting the work of helpers. The Iron Molders decided in 1876 that "any member can employ a person for the following purposes—to skim, shake out and to cut sand, but for no other purposes."[14] The helper was to be strictly confined to this work and not to be promoted to the status of a journeyman. A former rule of the Boiler Makers was as follows: "Helpers shall be kept strictly to helpers' work."[15]

Realizing the difficulty of confining an employee to work of low grade, especially when it is to the interest of the employer to advance him, the unions have as a rule sought to strengthen the restrictions as to work by hedging them about with additional regulations. A few unions have done this by limiting the helper in the use of tools. For example, in an agreement of Sheet Metal Workers, Local Union Number

[14] Constitution, 1876, p. 35.
[15] Proceedings, 1901, p. 266.

143, of New York City, with their employers it is stipulated that each employer shall be allowed one helper when necessary, "said helper not be considered an apprentice and must not handle tools."[16] It is obvious that this restriction as to tools is merely to strengthen and enforce the rule that helpers are not to be apprentices, that is, learners of the trade in any sense of the word.

Since it would be difficult to control the work of the helpers if their number were excessive in proportion to the amount of work allotted to them, it has been customary for most unions which pursue the policy of absolute restriction to limit the number of helpers allowed in a shop or on a job. For instance, when the Iron Molders first began their great fight against the use of "berkshires" in the molding industry, they did not deny the necessity for helpers, but opposed their employment by the molders, and especially the employment of an unlimited number.[17]

There are certain obstacles which have prevented trade unions wholly or in part from carrying out the policy of cutting off helpers from every avenue of promotion. These obstacles may be enumerated as follows: (i) the indifference or the hostile attitude of those directly affected by the policy; (ii) the rise of non-union shops in consequence of efforts at strict enforcement; (iii) the desire to extend unionism to unorganized districts; (iv) the lack of a definite line separating the work of helpers from that of journeymen; (v) non-uniformity in enforcement by different local unions; and (vi) the decay of the apprentice system.

(i) The lack of support if not the open opposition of all the classes directly concerned—journeymen, helpers, and employers—prevents the enforcement of absolute restriction.

Three reasons may be assigned for the reluctance of journeymen to aid in enforcing the rules of their unions forbidding the promotion of helpers: the desire of journeymen to exploit fellow-workmen; the desire of skilled mechanics to

[16] Annual Report, New York Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1908. Part I, p. 262.

[17] Motley, p. 24.

get rid of the rough work of a trade; and the personal friendship existing between mechanics and their helpers.

By allowing helpers to encroach upon mechanics' work, journeymen who are paid by the day are thus relieved of work supposed to be done by themselves. At the Machinists' Convention in 1911, when the helper question was, as often before, under discussion, a delegate said that the trouble was not with the helper or the specialist but with the machinist, who is directly responsible for the advancement of the helper in the shop, ofttimes teaching him to do the work which he is paid as a machinist to do himself.[18]

If the journeymen are paid by the piece, each of them is usually anxious, from motives of self-interest, to have his helper or helpers do as much work as possible. A contracting journeyman is often able to make a considerable profit from his helpers by employing them at a wage much lower than that which journeymen make, and by having them do all the low-grade and perhaps a large part of the more skilled work of the trade. Because of the tendency of iron molders to do this, Local Union Number 1 of Philadelphia as early as 1855 inserted the following provision in its constitution: "Nor shall any journeyman working by the piece be allowed a helper for any other purpose than to make cores, skim and turn out castings unless a majority of the members of this union in a shop in which he may work sign a paper in favor of giving him permission."[19]

Again, journeymen by permitting helpers to do work which is classed as journeyman's work often get out of performing distasteful work. As mechanics become highly skilled, it is natural that they should take pride in confining themselves to that work which gives a certain dignity to the worker. The disposition of journeymen to have helpers do the rougher part of journeymen's work is indicated in the numerous union rules directed at the journeymen rather than at the employers. For example, the Machinists provide that "journeymen members refusing to do any kind of work be-

[18] Proceedings, 1911, p. 148.
[19] International Molders' Journal, November, 1911, p. 825.

longing to the trade simply because it may be rough or dirty shall be subject to a fine or expulsion."[20]

It happens not infrequently—so state many trade-union leaders—that union regulations designed to restrict helpers to unskilled work are violated by journeymen who for some reason have a personal interest in their helpers. This personal interest may be the result of family or neighborly relations, or of long and intimate association. Speaking on this point,[21] Secretary Reynolds of the International Union of Ceramic, Mosaic and Encaustic Tile Layers and Helpers said that the tile layer and his helper travel from place to place together; that they become intimate, and that the journeyman frequently allows his helper to do work forbidden by the union. This same personal interest often induces a mechanic to secure for his helper admission to full union membership.

The persons most active in obstructing the enforcement of union regulations forbidding the promotion of helpers are the employers, who naturally claim the right to classify the work of their establishments and to promote deserving employees. Consequently, they resent the demands of the unions that such and such work be set aside as helpers' work and that no helper ever be promoted to journeymanship. The National Metal Trades Association, for example, makes this statement in its declaration of principles: "Since we, as employers, are responsible for the work turned out by our workmen, we must have full discretion to designate the men we consider competent to perform the work and to determine the conditions under which the work shall be prosecuted, the question of the competency of the men being determined solely by us."[22] The National Association of Manufacturers declares that, "in the interest of the employers and the employees of the country, no limitation should be placed upon the opportunities of any person to learn any trade to which he or she may be adapted."[23]

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[20] Subordinate Lodge Constitution, 1911, art. vi, sec. 4.
[21] Interview with the writer.
[22] The Review, March, 1914, p. v.
[23] Proceedings, 1903, p. 166.

The third class of persons who hinder the enforcement of the union policy of absolute restriction upon the promotion of helpers consists of the helpers themselves. It is the deep interest of the helpers in their own welfare that makes the execution of union rules pertaining to the promotion of helpers distinctly different from the enforcement of most union regulations. Such rules, for example, as those having to do with the hours of labor and the sanitary conditions of the shops concern directly two classes only,—the employers and the employees as a body, and the extent of the enforcement of these rules is the resultant of two more or less contending forces. On the other hand, the extent to which a rule restricting the privileges of assistant workmen is enforced is the resultant of three distinct forces, as in such matters the employees are no longer a unit, but are divided into two distinct groups. If a local union, for instance, in any trade demands an increase of ten per cent in wages, the success of their demand depends upon the views of the employers as to the desirability of the increase or upon the comparative strength of the employers and of the employees as a whole. But if the same union demands that helpers be confined to certain work, the outcome of the demand is rendered more uncertain by reason of the fact that the helpers oppose it.

It is natural that every workman should seek to obtain that employment which will bring him, other things being equal, the greatest money return for the labor expended. Every helper, therefore, seeks opportunity for advancement in his trade or industry. If the employer offers him a position which carries with it a larger wage than he has been accustomed to receive, he will in all likelihood be anxious to grasp the opportunity. Especially will he be likely to do this if by so doing he gets rid of performing unskilled work. If the journeymen go on a strike to enforce the rule that helpers be confined to helpers' work and never be promoted to journeymanship, those helpers who are semi-skilled mechanics will probably act as strike breakers, for such an

occasion presents them with the opportunity for rapid promotion.

In trades where the helpers are unorganized there is little or no pressure that can be brought to bear on them by the unions to secure conformity to helper regulations. The auxiliary workmen, being independent of the unions, do not fear the loss of union privileges and benefits, nor are they much influenced by appeals to support the cause of labor. This point will be more fully developed in a later chapter on the organization of the helper.

If helpers are organized and stand in some relation to the journeymen, or even if their organization is independent of the journeymens' unions, there is a possibility that fear of the loss of the journeymen's support may induce caution in violating the rules of the union of which the helpers are a part or upon which they rely for support. Sometimes helpers will even enter into agreements with journeymen which retard the advancement of the helpers. For example, the Mosaic and Encaustic Tile Layers and the Hexagon Labor Club of the Tile Layers' Helpers of New York City agreed "that a member of the Hexagon Labor Club shall accompany a tile layer on all jobs within a radius of two hundred miles of this city under penalty of $25.00 for the first offense and $50.00 for the second offense, each job worked without a member of the Hexagon Labor Club to be an offense. Also the helpers will not be allowed to handle tools, to lay tiles or to back up facings under similar penalties. No strike shall be ordered on account of this agreement until after a conference with a committee of the bosses."[24] By limiting their membership and by securing the assistance of strong local unions of mechanics in enforcing the closed shop, organized helpers may obtain advantages which offset restrictions upon their promotion. Experience in most trades, however, shows that when chances for promotion come to helpers they will accept them and risk the consequences.

[24] Journal of the Knights of Labor, May 2, 1895, p. 2.

(ii) The second obstacle to the enforcement of a policy of absolute restriction is the tendency of that policy to produce non-union mechanics. Intelligent helpers working in intimate contact with mechanics will, to some degree, learn the arts of the craft, however difficult the work may be. If such helpers are not given some hope of future betterment, they become indifferent, if not actually hostile, to union interests, and drift into non-union ranks as opportunities offer. In times of business activity or of threatened strike, these non-union men recruited from the helpers are a force to be reckoned with in maintaining union rules. In short, absolute restriction shuns one danger only to fall into another. If these helper-trained mechanics are admitted to the union in order to enforce demands upon the employers, the rule that helpers shall not become journeymen is violated. On the other hand, if the helpers are persistently denied union privileges, they form a reserve force by means of which the employers are able to dictate terms. A writer early stated with reference to helpers in iron molding that if a molder rebelled against a reduction of prices, his oldest buck would take his place. This reduced molders to a state of serfdom.[25]

(iii) The extension of unionism as an obstacle to the carrying out of the policy of absolute restriction is closely connected with that of the creation of non-union shops. Helpers in union shops go into non-union territory and secure employment as journeymen. Later, when the union seeks to extend its jurisdiction to these new fields, it is virtually obliged to take in all workmen found engaged as mechanics. The secretary of the Tile Layers says that in 1913 he organized a lodge of tile layers at Dayton, Ohio, and that every member of that lodge had formerly been a helper in some other teritory, but not one of them had ever before been recognized by the union as a competent mechanic.[26]

Self-preservation may force a union to disregard its policy in individual cases where a helper goes neither into a non-

[25] Iron Molders' Journal, January, 1877, p. 194.
[26] Interview with the writer.

union shop nor into new territory. If a helper is promoted contrary to union regulations and the conditions are such that the local lodge does not wish to resort to strenuous measures to nullify such promotion, it must extend the privileges of membership to the helper thus promoted in order to keep control of the work over which it claims jurisdiction.

(iv) The fourth obstacle to the enforcement of the policy of absolute restriction is the difficulty found in drawing a line between the work of the helper and that of the journeyman. In some trades there is a natural division of work between the mechanic and his helper. In the blowing of glass bottles there is no difficulty in determining the respective duties of a journeyman, a mold boy, and a cleaner-off. In other trades, as of a machinist or a blacksmith, it is well-nigh impossible to tell just where the work of the helper ends and that of the mechanic begins. Rules to the effect that helpers must be kept at helpers' work are here difficult to enforce, with the result of gradual encroachment on the part of the auxiliary workmen upon the indefinitely defined work of the journeymen.

This encroachment of the helper is increased when shop conditions are changing by reason of the introduction of new machinery and of new processes of work. If a new machine replacing handwork is introduced, the question will frequently arise as to whether the operation of the machine by an employee previously a helper is a violation of the union policy and of the union agreement that helpers must not be promoted to mechanics' work. The unions will claim that the operation of the machine belongs to the workmen whom the machine has displaced. The employers, on the contrary, may desire to have the machine operated by a cheaper workman, probably a former helper who is willing to work for less than the minimum union rate for journeymen. The usual result is to force the union to extend its jurisdiction over all the work of the shop, and thus to open its doors to workmen previously declared ineligible for union

membership. A circular sent out by the general office of the Blacksmiths in 1902 admits that helpers, especially in shops using much machinery, can with little practice do a large part of the work of a smith, and that "the drop-hammer forging machines, bolt-header, bulldozer and other machines have gradually but surely robbed the blacksmith of his individuality and made him a specialist."[27] Similar changes in the machinists' trade, which have made it difficult to define machinists' work, led the president of the International Association to recommend that the union admit to membership all workmen in machine shops.[28]

(v) The fifth obstacle to the enforcement of union rules forbidding the promotion of helpers and their entrance into the union as journeymen is that non-enforcement in one locality may prevent enforcement in another. With respect to the necessity for uniform enforcement, a trade-entrance requirement differs from other union regulations. If a national union should enact an eight-hour rule for all its members, non-enforcement in some localities would not necessarily prevent enforcement in others. On the other hand, if a national union have a rule that no helper shall be promoted to journeyman's work or admitted to union membership as a journeyman, and if a part of the local unions do not enforce the rule, its effect is largely destroyed, since helpers admitted to membership in one local union cannot as a rule be denied the privilege of transferring their membership. The power of a national union to keep helpers from being promoted and admitted to the union as journeymen is measured by the power or the willingness of its weakest local unions in this respect. The unions which have adopted the policy of absolute restriction have made vigorous if often ineffectual efforts to force all local unions to respect the trade-entrance regulations.

(vi) Finally, the decay of the apprentice system is an obstacle to the enforcement of the policy of absolute re-

[27] Proceedings, 1903, p. 15.
[28] Bulletin, U. S. Bureau of Labor, no. 67, November, 1906, p. 689.

striction. It is not my purpose to enter into a discussion of the decline of this system of training mechanics. It is sufficient to say that with the coming of the modern industrial system apprentices have disappeared in many trades, even though the name still survives and, as has been seen, is applied to different classes of auxiliary workmen. Since apprentices are few in American trades, the ranks of the mechanics must be filled from other sources, one of the most fruitful of which in certain trades is the group of auxiliary workmen employed therein. For example, Mr. Perry, a stove manufacturer of Troy, New York, arguing for the use and the promotion of helpers in iron molding, said: "I do not use the term apprentices, for the reason that none exist in our trade, nor have they ever existed within my remembrance."[29]

(b) The failure of the rigid plan of absolute restriction has led most unions to adopt more liberal policies—policies not adopted, as a rule, through any benevolent motive, but in order to control the helper and to advance the interests of the journeyman. The Blacksmiths, Boiler Makers, Electrical Workers, Elevator Constructors, Glass Workers, Machinists, Potters, Printing Pressmen, Plumbers, Steam Fitters, and Tile Layers have at various times made provision whereby helpers might under certain conditions be advanced to the position of journeymen. This has usually been an attempt on the part of the unions to bring their policy into conformity with actual conditions. That unions have accepted, in modified form, the system which had forced itself upon them is illustrated by the experience of the Blacksmiths' International Union.

In 1902 a circular sent out by the general office of the Blacksmiths' Union referred to the fact that helpers in machine shops readily become smiths, and that daily complaints were received to the effect that helpers were being put on fires at lower rates than were paid smiths.[30] A year later Mr. O'Connell, in rendering a decision in a jurisdic-

[29] Quoted in the Iron Molders' Journal, May, 1877, p. 327.
[30] Proceedings, 1903, p. 15.

tional dispute between the International Brotherhood of Blacksmiths and the Allied Metal Mechanics, said: "My knowledge of the blacksmith's trade leads me to believe that the blacksmith's helper is the apprentice to the blacksmith's trade . . . for as a general rule there are no apprentices in the Blacksmith's trades except the helper who is looking forward at all times to the day when he will stand behind the anvil as a blacksmith."[31] By referring to the Blacksmiths' constitution it is seen that no provision was made whereby a helper could become a smith. The constitution of 1899 merely declares that "no helper shall take a fire unless he receives the same wages paid the blacksmith."[32] In 1905, however, there was added to the elaborate apprenticeship regulations the following clause: "Local unions shall do all in their power to abolish the apprentice system and helpers shall be advanced according to merit."[33] The failure to restrict the helper thus led to the complete abandonment of the apprentice system and to the legalization of the prevailing method of admission to the trade. With the exception of the readoption of an apprentice clause to satisfy lodges in the South, where helpers are in the main negroes, the International Brotherhood of Blacksmiths has continued to encourage the promotion of the helper.

Prominent among the few unions which still hold out against the promotion of helpers on any terms is the International Association of Marble Workers. This union furnishes an excellent example of the reluctance of organized artisans to give up their policy of absolute restriction even though the policy is not enforced. Joseph McCulloch, a business agent of the Marble Cutters and Setters' Union, stated in his testimony before the Industrial Commission in 1901 that the marble setters are mainly recruited from the ranks of the marble setters' helpers.[34] Yet a study of the constitutions and the convention proceedings of the Inter-

[31] Proceedings, 1903, p. 18.
[32] Art. xiii, sec. 3.
[33] Constitution, 1905, art. xiii, sec. 3.
[34] Report of U. S. Industrial Commission, vol. viii, p. 216.

national Association of Marble Workers reveals the fact that this union has rejected proposition after proposition providing that helpers be recognized in some degree. Although resolutions on this question have been offered at almost every convention, a few typical examples will show how determined are the Marble Workers that helpers shall not be encouraged by the union to become mechanics.

In 1906 Helpers' Local Union Number 15 petitioned the Marble Workers for some recognition of the helper's right to become a marble setter. They contended that when the supply of setters in any city became exhausted, instead of admitting questionable and undesirable men into the setters' local union, helpers of experience should be advanced to the position of improver. This very modest request of the helpers was refused.[35] Again, in 1911 an amendment to the rules of the International Association was offered to the effect that in localities where no shops exist or where the shops employ a total of two apprentice cutters or less, a helper who had worked at his branch of the trade three years or more should, when the demand for setters and cutters was greater than the supply, be given the privilege of making application to the local union of cutters and setters for membership.[36] This amendment was not adopted.

Finally in 1912 the following resolution was presented to the Marble Workers' convention: "In a locality where there is plenty of marble work and marble setters cannot be secured, in order to stop the people not belonging to the I. A. M. W. from doing marble work a helper who has been a member of the I. A. M. W. for four years shall be given a weekly working card from setters to set marble until any number of setters get out of employment, then let the helper go back to helping but after the helper has had one year's experience at setting marble he shall be issued a marble journeyman setters' card."[37] This resolution was referred to the committee on constitution, and after a few minor

[35] Proceedings, 1906, p. 12.
[36] Proceedings, 1911, p. 20.
[37] Proceedings, 1912, p. 188.

amendments had been made it was referred to the local unions for a referendum vote. Secretary Hogan of the International Association says that practically all the helpers voted for the resolution and all the journeymen against it. Since the number of journeymen in the union greatly exceeds the number of helpers, the resolution was lost.[38]

After a union has once recognized the helper as a possible journeyman, the next step is to work out a definite scheme by which the evils involved in the promotion of helpers may be minimized. Two plans have been followed in this particular. One has been to make the promotion of helpers supplemental to the regular apprentice system in vogue in a particular trade; the other has been to adopt an exclusive helper system of promotion fashioned as nearly as possible after the customary apprentice system.

At the present time the Boiler Makers, Glass Workers, Machinists, Potters, Printing Pressmen, and Tile Layers are pursuing the plan of promoting helpers to the position of apprentices. The International Association of Boiler Makers requires that "fifty per cent of the apprentices shall be taken from the ranks of the helpers, local conditions to govern, providing such helper be a member in good standing in the local union of the helpers of this Brotherhood and has actually worked two years in the service of the company to which he is to serve as an apprentice. Oldest helpers in point of service must have preference."[39] The Machinists by a recent referendum vote decided that helpers are eligible to become apprentices.[40] The International Union of Ceramic, Mosaic and Encaustic Tile Layers and Helpers provides that "all helpers must serve at least four years as an I. U. helper before becoming an improver,"[41] and that "all improvers shall come from the ranks of the helpers' locals affiliated with the I. U."[42]

[38] Interview with the writer.
[39] Subordinate Lodge Constitution, 1908, art. iii, sec. 2.
[40] Constitution, 1913, art. i, p. 57.
[41] Constitution, 1912, art. xiii, sec. 5.
[42] Ibid., art. xxi, sec. 3.

Likewise among the Window Glass Workers[43] and Printing Pressmen[44] and in certain branches of the pottery industry[45] it is the policy of the unions to have all apprentices taken from the ranks of helpers and assistants.

As a means of mitigating the evils incident to the use of helpers in those unions seeking to maintain apprentice regulations, this plan of having a part or all of the apprentices drawn from the helpers is regarded as possessing distinct advantages over the policy of absolutely forbidding the promotion of a helper to work classed as journeyman's work. In the first place, it tends to conciliate the helper and thus to prevent the growth of a hostile spirit toward the organized journeymen. If helpers are given some opportunity for advancement, however slight that opportunity may be, it will have an effect in keeping them from violating union regulations. By obeying such regulations a helper may hope that some day he will receive union assistance in his efforts to gain recognition as a journeyman. On the other hand, if he violates the union regulations he is brought into union disfavor and cut off from all aid in his efforts to become a journeyman or to better his condition.

Again, this policy hedges in and strengthens the regular apprentice system in that it provides for a longer period of training for those entering the ranks of the journeymen. It also limits more narrowly the field from which apprentices, so called, may be drawn. The Tile Layers require that helpers serve four years in order to become improvers, and that improvers serve two years in order to be eligible for membership as journeymen. This makes the full period of learning the trade six years, and limits very narrowly the source from which both improvers and journeymen can be drawn. There is the further advantage that an apprentice regulation of this kind will secure the aid of the helpers in

[43] Proceedings, 1906, p. 136.

[44] Constitution and By-laws, 1903, art. iii, sec. 1.

[45] Wage Scale and Agreements between the United Association of Potters and the National Brotherhood of Operative Potters, 1911, p. 16.

preventing employers from getting improvers or apprentices from any source except the helpers.

It has been the continuous policy of the Steam Fitters, the Elevator Workers, the Potters—in certain branches of the industry—and lately the Blacksmiths to allow the promotion of helpers, and to restrict their employment and promotion with limitations similar to the ordinary apprentice regulations, as well as with the additional requirement that a helper must stand an examination before a committee of journeymen before he shall be recognized as eligible for journeymanship. Thus, the International Association of Steam, Hot Water and Power Pipe Fitters and Helpers provides that "each Local Branch of Steam Fitters shall have a trade test or examining board to examine into the mechanical ability and moral character and physical condition of all candidates seeking admission to membership as Steam Fitters. No Local Branch of Steam Fitters shall accept an application unless the applicant can show he has worked five years at the trade."[46] Likewise, an electrical worker's helper must serve four years before he is allowed to take an examination for promotion.[47] The Blacksmiths provide neither for a definite time of service nor for an examination, but merely make provision that "helpers shall be advanced according to merit."[48]

The essential thing in the provisions of all the unions for the promotion of helpers without an additional period of service as apprentices is that the whole matter is placed in the hands of the examining committee or of the organized journeymen. This is a departure from the customary mode of dealing with apprentices, who are usually not required to undergo the ordeal of an examination.

The question naturally arises as to the reason for this distinction. Why do unions which recognize the helpers as the legitimate learners of their respective trades demand that the helpers be required to take an examination to test

[46] Constitution, 1908, sec. 32.
[47] Constitution, 1909, art. vi, sec. 1.
[48] Constitution for Local Unions, 1912, art. xiv, sec. 3.

their fitness for journeymanship, while those unions which recognize only apprentices as the learners of a trade as a rule make no such requirement? Why does the International Brotherhood of Blacksmiths, for example, provide that apprentices shall become smiths when they have served four years, but at the same time very indefinitely provide that "helpers shall be advanced according to merit"?[49] Again, why is it that the United Association of Journeymen Plumbers, Gas Fitters, Steam Fitters and Steam Fitters' Helpers provides that plumbers' apprentices shall serve an apprenticeship of five years,[50] but that steam or sprinkler fitters' helpers must pass a satisfactory examination before they can become eligible to membership?[51] It cannot be because journeymen are in a position to know the efficiency of the apprentice better than they do that of the helpers; for, if anything, helpers work in closer contact with journeymen than do apprentices. It is not that the unions which promote their helpers do not keep in close touch with them and consequently know nothing of the time served as helpers, because all such unions register their helpers and keep complete account of them by methods similar to those of other unions in keeping track of their apprentices. The extent to which this is sometimes done is shown by the following rule of the International Association of Steam Fitters: "Helpers must be affiliated three years with the local they were initiated into before they are entitled to transfer to another local of helpers."[52]

There are two possible explanations of the differences existing in the promotion of helpers and of apprentices. The first is that among helpers there are often many mature men who have never learned any trade and are unlikely ever to be desirable candidates for membership as journeymen. Such being the case, an examination is the most practical way of separating the desirable candidates from

[49] Constitution for Local Unions, 1912, art. xiv, sec. 3.
[50] Constitution, 1910, sec. 117.
[51] Constitution, 1910, sec. 138.
[52] Constitution, 1908, sec. 33.

those not wanted. With the apprentice it is different. As a rule only a few apprentices are taken in a shop, and they are taken in primarily to learn the trade. It is possible to exercise much discretion in their selection. If capable and earnest boys are chosen, it is more than likely that at the end of a specified apprenticeship period they will be fit for entrance to journeymanship.

The second reason for this distinction, and perhaps the more plausible one, is that there is more danger of overcrowding a trade by a helper system of preparation than by an apprentice system. Extra precautions are therefore necessary in order to prevent such a surplus of workmen. That the examination of helpers desiring to become union journeymen is designed to limit the number entering the trade rather than primarily to test the skill of the candidate is suggested by the numerous complaints that are made by contractors to this effect. The dissatisfaction with the union examining board frequently terminates in a decided stand against accepting the union decisions as to who is prepared to do mechanics' work. Thus the Master Steam Fitters of St. Louis made the following rule: "Any fitter having been rejected by the examining board of the union, shall be examined by a committee of the M. S. F. A., and if found competent shall be permitted to work in any shop that will employ him."[53] That the Steam Fitters' board had been rejecting capable mechanics seems probable, for the Master Steam Fitters would hardly have wanted to employ inefficient men and pay them the standard rate of wages. A special report of the United States commissioner of labor states as to the steam fitters that "the contractors complain very much that there are not enough union workmen for the work that should be done in the busy season. They claim that the union intentionally keeps its membership low, and that the means of doing this is by making the conditions of the examination such that new men can not pass it."[54]

[53] Report of U. S. Industrial Commission, vol. vii, p. 949.
[54] Eleventh Special Report of the Commissioner of Labor, p. 375

That there are some grounds for these claims of the employers is confirmed by the dissatisfaction of helpers with the rules providing for their promotion. The Tile Layers appear to be more liberal in their treatment of helpers than most unions, yet there is much dissatisfaction among the helpers of this trade with the limited opportunities for promotion given them by the local unions. A member of the helpers' lodge of tile layers at Pittsburgh, writing in the Tile Layers' journal, protests against the hampering of the tile layers' helpers by the tile layers.[55] Another writer, presumably a helper, says that according to the present system, helpers remain helpers for years before they can become journeymen.[56] Even the president of the Tile Layers pleads that the helpers be given fair play, asserting that the journeymen too often look after their own interests to the detriment of the helpers.[57]

It is pertinent to ask why there should be any likelihood of there being too many mechanics from the union point of view if helpers are promoted, or why extra precautions are considered necessary if a helper instead of an apprentice system of trade entrance prevails. The answer is found in the circumstance that if workers are primarily engaged to learn a trade and only incidentally assist a journeyman, it may be easy to dispense with such assistance and to limit the number of apprentices to conform to the needs of the trade, but if workers are primarily employed to assist journeymen and incidentally learn the trade, such limitations as to number are not ordinarily practicable. The Steam Fitters, for instance, would like to diminish the number of helpers in proportion to the number of journeymen on a job, but, recognizing that each fitter needs a helper, they simply seek to conform to the following rule: "A journeyman Steam Fitter shall be entitled to one helper only."[58]

[55] Tile Layers and Helpers' Journal, November, 1906, p. 12.
[56] Ibid., April, 1912, p. 12.
[57] Ibid., June, 1905, p. 8.
[58] Constitution, Local Union No. 120, Cleveland, 1912, art. iii, sec. 6.

From the union point of view here lies the peculiar evil inherent in a helper system of promotion to a trade as contrasted with an apprentice system. If it be acknowledged that a helper is an essential factor in the performance of the duties of one mechanic, it may be argued that every mechanic should be supplied with a helper. It might also be reasonably argued that if one helper at the end of a certain time of service as a helper shows efficiency and is advanced to journeymanship, all helpers fulfilling the same requirements should likewise be advanced. But if all journeymen should have helpers and all helpers should in a certain time become journeymen, the result would be a serious dislocation of union policies.

An editorial in the official journal of the Plumbers for February, 1904, argues as follows along this line: "Taking up the rule that every plumber should have one helper, and that the helper should serve four years, let us see what the result would be in about eight years. Figuring that there are 200 plumbers in a city, each one with a helper, in four years there would be 200 more plumbers. There would be 400 plumbers in a city that hasn't use for over 215 or 220. In another four years there would be 800 plumbers in a city that has no use for more than 250 or perhaps 300." This wholesale method of recruiting a trade will by the law of supply and demand crowd down wages, with all the evils incident thereto.

This same danger is voiced by a writer in the Steam Fitters' journal: "Generally speaking, the helper of today is the steam fitter of tomorrow, and I would suggest that steps be taken as soon as practicable whereby a method will be adopted providing for a system of apprenticeship. . . . If something is not done to regulate the number of young men desiring to learn our trade, eventually there will be a large surplus on the market."[59]

In order to restrict more narrowly the numbers entering a trade and to keep helpers from doing journeymen's

[59] Communication in Proceedings, 1907, p. 13.

work, the unions adopting the helper system of trade entrance have sought in some form or other to limit as rigidly as possible the number of helpers employed in a shop or on a job. An agreement between the Steam Fitters and their employers in Washington in 1900 provides that "no steam fitter shall work more than one helper on pipe ranging from three and one-half inches down, and two helpers on pipe ranging from four inches upwards."[60] A similar agreement between the master and the journeymen plumbers of McAlester, Oklahoma, stipulates that no shop shall be allowed more than one registered helper, who shall not handle tools except when working with journeymen.[61]

In adopting regulations to govern the number and the promotion of helpers, trade unions have in a large measure sought to limit the number of journeymen and have given only slight consideration to the needs of particular employers or to the skill of the helpers. Such regulations have been difficult to enforce. Any rule limiting the advancement of helpers interferes with the interests of journeymen, employers, and helpers as individuals, and will meet disregard, opposition, and evasion. Moreover, as in the case of absolute restriction upon the promotion of helpers, the rigid enforcement of a modified policy is hindered by the disposition of the unions to organize all shops in union territory and to extend unionism into every field where members of their respective crafts are employed.[62]

(2) Inability to keep the helper within certain prescribed limits or to formulate a scheme for his promotion has led a few national unions, notably the Plumbers and the Iron Molders, to deny the right of employers to use helpers at all. In 1894, after the Plumbers had been debating the helper question for years, a writer in the Plumbers' official journal asserted that helpers had been a most important factor in bringing about the demoralization of the trade, and that a solution of the helper question would solve many

[60] Proceedings, 1900, p. 52.
[61] Plumbers, Gas and Steam Fitters' Journal, July, 1908, p. 13.
[62] See above, pages 37–45.

other questions which were a matter of concern to the plumbers.[63] From this time attention began to be centered on the abolition of all helpers. Various rules have since been passed designed to make effective the policy of getting rid of the helper class. This policy is clearly set forth in the resolution passed at the national convention in 1897 that where there was no conflict with previous agreements all helpers and apprentices should be abolished.[64] The fight against the use of helpers was waged on two grounds, namely, that the helper is not needed, and that the proper regulation of the system is impossible.

As to the first, it has been contended that plumbers seldom need assistance, and that when assistance is necessary it is in every way better to have two journeymen work together than to use one journeyman and a helper. It is even claimed that the use of helpers tends to foster laziness in the journeyman. It is quite evident that this argument as set forth by the Plumbers has very little force. It was almost unknown until it was decided that helpers were a menace to the welfare of the union; moreover, it is contrary to human nature for a body of workmen to desire to get rid of assistants on no other ground than that they are not needed.

The real cause for the Plumbers' desire to abolish all helpers lies in the fact that the nature of the trade is such that it is difficult to regulate their work and advancement. As a prominent plumber, Mr. Rogan of Minneapolis, has said, "The only proper solution of the helper question is not to have any helpers at all."[65] The effect of the helper system in producing a surplus of workmen and in causing trade disintegration is seen at its greatest in the plumbing trade. This can best be understood by contrasting this trade with another trade which is very much like it,—steam fitting.

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[63] Plumbers, Gas and Steam Fitters' Official Journal, April, 1894, p. 8.

[64] Proceedings, 1897, p. 73.

[65] Plumbers, Gas and Steam Fitters' Official Journal, October and November, 1906, p. 77.

In the first place, plumbing is predominantly an industry of small shops. There are, of course, large jobs requiring contractors of considerable capital and responsibility; but a great part of the plumbing of a city consists of small jobs,—putting in a single closet, sink, or bathtub. These small jobs, together with a large amount of repair work, afford a means of livelihood for the master plumber with little capital, and offer a field of work for the low-grade mechanic. If each plumber has a helper and if each helper becomes a journeyman, the trade will be speedily overcrowded and unemployment will result. This unemployment will lead to the establishment of more small shops, for it is no great undertaking for a plumber having a kit of tools to open a small establishment of his own.* Again, if the helpers are prevented by union rules from entering the trade as union members, they drift into small non-union shops or contribute to the establishment of more of like size. In either case, the helpers find their way into the trade and increase the number of journeymen. The existence of these low-grade shops renders organization difficult, decreases the stability of bodies already organized, and makes collective bargaining uncertain. In short, it results in the general depression of the trade.

In steam fitting there is not the same likelihood that so many small shops will be established. Steam fitting jobs are usually the installation of large plants, work upon which is done as a unit. The contractor must possess some capital and must be a man of considerable responsibility. The absence of conditions favorable to the establishment of small shops places the Steam Fitters in a position to control their trade. If helpers become dissatisfied with the treatment accorded them by the journeymen, they have few small non-union shops into which they can go, nor can they profitably set up as masters.[66]

[66] The Baltimore business agent of the International Association of Plumbers, Gas Fitters, Steam Fitters and Steam Fitters' Helpers states that in Baltimore there are about 800 plumbing shops, 15 of which are union, and that about 10 steam-fitting establishments, all union, do practically all the steam fitting in the city.

Again, plumbing is more liable to disintegration and to a grading of work than is steam fitting. Even if there were not so many small contractors in the plumbing business, the helper would be a dangerous factor from the standpoint of the journeymen plumbers. When calls come for low-grade construction or for repair work, it is more than likely that a helper, provided one man can do the work, will be sent. As a result, the helper and the poorly trained mechanic often find employment while mechanics of higher grade are idle. In steam fitting, inasmuch as the work is of a more uniform character and is done on the average for a higher class of buildings, there is not the same tendency either to grade work or to send the poorer workers to the job.

In iron molding there are similar possibilities of trade disintegration growing out of the helper system. For years the Iron Molders' Union has sought to get rid of the helpers known as berkshires. A discussion of the berkshire system and the policy of the union in connection therewith will be taken up with the question of the payment of the helper, for the two questions are indissolubly connected.

Obviously, a union which is opposed to the promotion of helpers proper will also be opposed to the employment of advanced helpers, for it is from the former class of workmen that the latter is recruited. Conversely, a union which provides for the promotion of helpers proper to an intermediary position, as before explained, provides for the employment of advanced helpers. Union policies with reference to the advanced helper who is allowed to become a journeyman have been already sufficiently set forth in connection with the consideration of the helper proper. The policy of the unions is to limit very strictly the number of such helpers.

Organized journeymen in a few trades have allowed, though reluctantly, the employment of advanced helpers of a different kind, that is, helpers who are not permitted to become journeymen. This policy has been adopted in order

to avoid competition with such men as non-unionists and to provide for unionizing the helpers without giving them recognition as full mechanics. This is the type of advanced helper who works at certain jobs within a trade, often independently of the supervision of a journeyman. The handy-man or specialist, as this type of workman is usually called, is very likely to be employed in those trades which are capable of a minute division of labor. In the machinists' and the boiler makers' trades in particular the handy-man has been a troublesome factor. Though these unions provide for the organization of the handy-men, they have always wished if possible to eliminate them. As President Gilthorpe of the Boiler Makers says: "We are working to eliminate the middle man or the handy man."[67]

The policy of abolishing all helpers is more difficult to enforce than the other policy previously described. The journeymen themselves stand in the way. This is due (a) to the desire of artisans to perform only skilled work, and (b) to the desire of individuals to be in positions of authority.

(a) When a man becomes in a high degree skilled in his trade, he is strongly inclined to restrict his work to the more skilled and technical parts. He takes delight in doing that which others cannot do or which they can do only with great difficulty. In addition to satisfying his desire to do skilled work only, he obtains greater remuneration for his services if he is engaged at all times in work which requires expert craftsmanship. It is obvious that if an employer can afford to pay a certain amount for the production of an article, it becomes possible for the skilled artisan to obtain a higher wage when the low-grade work is performed by a cheap workman than when he does all the work. These motives have contributed to the increase of the number of helpers in many trades, and consequently have been great stumbling blocks to unions in their efforts to restrict the number of helpers or to abolish the system.

The editor of the Plumbers' official journal, in com-

[67] In letter to the writer.

menting on the disposition of journeymen to demand a helper, said that some journeymen think they ought to have a boy to carry their overalls around and to shine their tools for them.[68] Organizer Burke of the Plumbers declared that "we have no one to blame but ourselves as the journeymen all around this eastern country are too lazy to carry their kits. The majority want a boy with them all the time. In some cases, I have known our men to quit when they were refused a helper."[69] The president of the International Association of Machinists said: "You will notice from the report on strikes that we have had several strikes against the introduction of the 'handyman' system. The employers are not to blame for this in all cases, for now and then we find instances where the machinists refuse to do a certain class of work. As a result the employer is forced to employ whoever he can to do the rough and dirty work."[70]

In harmony with the above statements are the following expressions from prominent employers. John S. Perry, a former stove manufacturer of Albany, in commenting on the berkshire system, said: "From time immemorial, previous to the formation of the molders' union, it was a custom almost without exception for a molder to employ at least one helper and not unfrequently two and even three. It would then have been considered a hardship if they had been denied this privilege."[71] A Chicago employer said that his firm used as many handy-men as they would if they ran a non-union shop. By way of explanation he said: "We find that while machinists may object to handymen doing the work for which they are competent, they themselves do not wish to do this class of work, and in this case have dropped their complaints if told that they would have to do it if they did not allow the handymen to do it."[72]

(b) Closely connected with the wish of a man to do skilled

[68] Plumbers, Gas and Steam Fitters' Official Journal, February, 1906, p. 2.
[69] Ibid., December, 1908, p. 10.
[70] Machinists' Monthly Journal, June, 1903, p. 486.
[71] Iron Molders' Journal, May, 1877, p. 326.
[72] Eleventh Special Report of the Commissioner of Labor, p. 221.

work only is the desire to control and supervise other workmen, thereby exalting his own importance. A writer in the Iron Molders' Journal in 1873 made this statement: "Let us pay a visit to a carwheel shop. What do we find? Two men working together: one is a molder, the other is a helper. Between them they do two days' work. The helper prepares the chill, inserts the pattern, does all the ramming, and the molder finishes the mold: but if it is blue Monday, the molder lays back on his dignity, and the helper becomes both molder and helper for the day."[73]

Employers are emphatic in the assertion of their right to employ any number of helpers and to promote them as they see fit. One of the principles of the National Metal Trades Association, stated in 1902 and still maintained, is that "the number of apprentices, helpers and handymen to be employed will be determined solely by the requirements of the employer."[74] The National Founders' Association in its outlined policy asserts in similar terms that "the number of apprentices, helpers and handymen to be employed will be determined solely by the employer."[75]

While such declarations voice the spirit of independence characterizing an employing class, there are nevertheless strong economic reasons why employers should wish not to be restricted in the employment of helpers. Helpers may be a source of profit to the employer by enabling him to economize in the use of labor, by supplying a sufficiency of labor in times of general trade activity, and by saving the duplication of machinery.

In trades where the character of the work is such that one or more persons must work together, or where work cannot be divided into skilled and unskilled parts but must be performed as a unit, employers usually favor the use of helpers. Their contention is that in such cases work can be done as well and as quickly by one skilled craftsman working in con-

[73] October, 1873, p. 132.
[74] Report of the President of the Machinists, May 1, 1902, p. 5; The Review, April, 1913, p. 53.
[75] The Review, May, 1913, p. 55.

junction with one or more helpers as by two or more expert mechanics. Likewise, if it is possible to divide the work of a trade into skilled and unskilled parts, it is usually to the employers' interests to make such a division of work and to employ labor corresponding in skill to the work to be done. Thus it is expensive for contracting plumbers and steam fitters to have heavy material carried to the place of construction by journeymen who receive from four to five dollars per day. In a difficulty between the master and the journeymen steam fitters of St. Louis one of the points at issue was the right of the master fitters to employ such labor as they saw fit to move and place heavy material of any description.[76]

It is to the interests of the employers to use helpers whenever such use will enable high-priced mechanics to continue uninterruptedly at highly skilled work. Thus Mr. Perry, speaking for the stove manufacturers, said: "A large portion of the flasks require two persons to 'lift off' and to 'close,' consequently if there are no helpers the molders are subject to constant interruptions in assisting each other, and thus much valuable time is needlessly lost by skilled workmen."[77]

Another important consideration with employers is the elasticity given to the supply of workmen by the helper system. There are ordinarily in a city only a sufficient number of journeymen to meet the usual trade demands. When a rush comes on and the supply of journeymen is exhausted, the employers may advance their work by employing more helpers and having them do the less skilled parts of the work which are sometimes performed by full mechanics. In a season when building is very active, master plumbers often desire to employ helpers to take from the journeymen all the labor possible, in order that a contract may be finished within a specified time. At a national convention of Master Plumbers in 1885 one of the delegates said that the fluctuations of their business are of such a nature that from neces-

[76] Report of U. S. Industrial Commission, vol. vii, p. 949.
[77] Quoted in the Iron Molders' Journal, May 10, 1877, p. 326.

sity young men must for a longer or shorter period of time be employed as helpers for the journeymen.[78]

In some industries manufacturers claim that by using helpers they are often saved the cost of duplicating machinery and patterns. Mr. Perry, who has been previously quoted, stated in this connection that such aid was important to the manufacturer. A molder working alone can put up thirty of the larger pieces of a stove, while the demand for these might be, say, forty pieces a day. With a helper he might put up forty and save duplicating patterns. Thousands of dollars have been saved in this way.[79]

The unions have been far from successful in their efforts either to restrict the number of helpers to the usual number of apprentices or to abolish them entirely. The United Brotherhood of Plumbers has perhaps fought the employment of helpers more zealously than any other union, but it has made little headway in the accomplishment of its purpose.

In 1896 the Plumbers passed stringent rules with regard to the employment of apprentices, and since a helper was considered as equivalent to an apprentice, the same laws were extended to helpers.[80] Inasmuch as the local lodges had not, as a rule, been enforcing the provisions of the national union with respect to helpers and apprentices, the following regulation was adopted: "Any local union failing to enforce these laws after said date shall for the first offense be fined $50.00 and after the lapse of four weeks if not enforced shall forfeit their charter in the United Association."[81] At the next annual convention only two local unions claimed to have lived up to the rules.[82] From Massachusetts it was reported that two lodges had attempted to carry out the regulation. These two local unions had gone out on strike, and now appealed to the national association for financial assistance.[83]

[78] Proceedings, 1885, p. 181.
[79] Iron Molders' Journal, May 10, 1877, pp. 326–327.
[80] Constitution, 1897, p. 25.
[81] Ibid., art. xv, sec. 7.
[82] Proceedings, 1897, p. 68.
[83] Ibid., p. 71.

In the next year, 1897, the Association went on record in favor of doing away with both helpers and apprentices.[84] The action of the convention in 1899 indicated that the regulations of 1897 must have proved ineffective, for again the regulations were changed. This time it was provided that the executive board of the Plumbers should designate a number of local unions which should do away with helpers and apprentices.[85] In 1902 the president of the Plumbers said: "During the past year gratifying progress has been made by a large number of our locals eliminating the helper and the establishment of a proper apprentice system. . . . We shall continue our efforts to abolish the unnecessary helper."[86]

In 1904 the president of the Plumbers again reported progress in restricting the employment of helpers, but added: "In several cities where our local unions have been working entirely without helpers, attempts have been made within the past year by the employers to return to the former custom. . . . The reduction of the number of helpers, I believe, is of more importance to the future welfare of our members than is the question of increase of wages."[87] There must have been considerable dissatisfaction with the progress made, for all the rules then in force were dropped and a new rule was adopted which left the helper question largely in the hands of the local unions.

While the United Association has not changed its regulations in regard to helpers since 1904, the elimination of the helper has by no means been accomplished, and still continues to be one of the important topics at the national conventions of plumbers. For instance, at the convention of 1906 there was a lengthy discussion as to whether the convention should take definite action on the helper and apprentice question or refer it to a joint committee of journeymen

[84] Proceedings, 1897, p. 73.
[85] Constitution, 1899, p. 26.
[86] Plumbers, Gas and Steam Fitters' Official Journal, October, 1902, p. 25.
[87] Ibid., October, 1904, p. 29.

and master plumbers. In the course of the discussion one delegate said that he did not think it possible to eliminate the helper because "the public would not stand for it." Another delegate said that the helper laws never had been enforced.[88] Finally, it was decided to leave the matter to a joint committee. This committee met at Indianapolis in 1908, but nothing was accomplished.[89]

It thus appears that the Plumbers have made little progress in their efforts to abolish the helper. For instance, in New York prior to the year 1903 the Plumbers had insisted on carrying all fixtures to the floors where they were to be used, but an agreement in this year between the master and the journeymen plumbers provided that porters should do work of this nature. It was also agreed that no helpers or apprentices should be hired from 1903 to 1908,[90] but by a new agreement, made in 1908, each plumber is allowed one helper and no term is specified for a helper to serve before he becomes eligible as a journeyman. When a helper considers himself competent, he may apply through his employer for an examination before the joint examining board of master and journeymen plumbers. If successful in the examination, he is rated as a first-class man and becomes a member of the journeymen's association.[91]

A few local unions have been successful in their struggle against the employment of helpers. In Chicago in 1899, by an agreement between the master and journeymen plumbers, helpers were eliminated.[92] President Burke of the United Brotherhood of Plumbers declares that at the present time the union shops of Chicago employ no helpers other than those who are regular apprentices.[93] While a few other

[88] Proceedings, 1906, p. 77.
[89] Plumbers, Gas and Steam Fitters' Official Journal, February, 1908, p. 9, December, 1908, p. 43.
[90] Eleventh Special Report of the U. S. Commissioner of Labor, p. 362.
[91] Annual Report, New York Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1908, Part I, p. 184.
[92] Plumbers, Gas and Steam Fitters' Official Journal, April, 1899, p. 8.
[93] Interview with the writer.

unions have from time to time reported the passing of the helper, it is evident from the foregoing discussion that on the whole but little progress has been made by the Plumbers in this direction. The other unions which have tried to restrict very narrowly the number of helpers employed or to eliminate them entirely have had essentially the same experience as the Plumbers.

CHAPTER II

The Hiring and Compensation of the Helper

The problems involved in the hiring and compensation of helpers are most clearly exhibited in those unions wherein the piece system of pay and the employment of helpers prevail. At the time of the organization of the Iron Molders' International Union the jurisdiction of the journeymen molders extended to all the work of a shop. It included the skilled work of preparing and finishing the molds and also such unskilled work as attending the crane, carrying flasks, tempering sand, skimming the molten iron, and taking out castings. The molder did not, however, attend to all of these varied duties himself. What was known as the berkshire system prevailed in most shops. Each molder, acting largely under pressure from the employer, engaged one or more "bucks," or berkshires, to assist him, and paid them from his own earnings.

Before the organization of the International Molders' Union there was much opposition by the various local unions to the berkshire system. Thus in the initial constitution of the Journeymen Stove and Hardware Molders' Union of Philadelphia, organized in 1855, there is found the following provision with regard to helpers: "No member of this union shall take a boy to learn the trade (unless it be his natural or adopted son), nor shall any journeymen working by the piece be allowed a helper for any other purpose than to make cores, skim and turn out castings, unless a majority of the members of this union in which he work, sign a paper in favor of giving him permission."[1]

From the first the International Molders' Union opposed this system. Its efforts were directed to (1) the abolition

[1] International Molders' Journal, November, 1911, p. 825.

of the prevailing system of hiring and paying the helpers, and (2) the abolition of all helpers proper and the establishment of a definite line between the work of the molders and that of the remote helpers. The attainment of the first of these ends was deemed necessary to the accomplishment of the second, which was the real consideration.

(1) The early attitude of the Molders toward the employment of berkshires was phrased as follows: "We desire here and now to say that it is against the spirit and intent of the law, is against justice and common sense, is, in fact, unconstitutional for any member of the Iron Molders' International Union to employ a helper and pay him out of his earnings. No helper can be employed unless paid by the proprietor of the shop, and no piece molder can run a helper, whether employed by himself or his employer."[2] In the constitution of 1876 it took the form of an outright prohibition: "No member working by the piece can employ a helper and pay him out of his (the molder's) wages."[3] This same constitution declares that "an employer demanding of molders that they shall work bucks shall constitute a lock out if indorsed in accordance with law."[4] The attitude of the Molders' Union toward the employment of bucks as indicated above has never changed. If less is heard about the opposition now than formerly, it is because the system has been for the most part abandoned.

When Secretary Kleiber of the International Molders' Union was asked why the Molders objected so strongly to the system, he replied in substance that such a system brings out all the selfishness, all the niggardliness, in the molders, with the result that the interests of the craft are sacrificed to personal interests. A further consideration of the system will explain what is here implied. In the first place, the payment of the helper by the molder tends to lessen the amount of work to be done by the skilled molder, and to overcrowd the trade more than is the case where the helper is paid by the

[2] Iron Molders' Journal, October 1, 1873, p. 133.
[3] P. 35.
[4] Ibid.

firm and all work is done by the day instead of by the piece. In other words, the evils of a helper system are accentuated when the journeyman assumes the role of employer. A molder agrees with his employer to work at so much a piece and pay his own helpers. The greater the amount of relatively unskilled work the molder has done by helpers, the more time he can give to the highly skilled work and consequently the greater his remuneration. But, in reality, by encouraging molders to give over a large part of their work to helpers, the amount of employment open to journeymen is decreased, with a consequent decline in the rate of wages. Again, the helpers, if allowed to encroach upon the more skilled parts of molding, learn the trade; then, if the wages paid them by the molders are not to their liking, they set up as molders themselves and thus increase the supply of journeymen.

The union view has been summed up as follows: "The system now in full force in Buffalo was the almost universal system in 1855–59, from one to five 'Bucks' for every journeyman; wages were being rapidly reduced; every reduction was followed by the journeyman hiring another buck. Molders were made about four times as fast as the necessities of the case or increase of the trade called for. Molders became so plentiful that all sorts of odious rules could be enforced with impunity."[5]

(2) Payment of helpers by the molders and their control by the molders have been so intimately associated that it is impossible to consider them as distinct problems. Suffice it to say that any attempt to limit the work of the helper and yet allow the molder to employ and pay him has been found impractical, for as long as a journeyman has an assistant paid by himself, he will exploit the helper to the fullest extent possible. On the other hand, it is unsatisfactory to have an employer pay a helper and place him under the control of a journeyman who is working by the piece, for it would be to the advantage of the molder to have the helper

[5] Iron Molders' Journal, October, 1873, p. 11.

do as much work as possible, thus inducing the evils above described.

The policy of the Molders has, therefore, consisted of two parts. They wished to have all helpers paid by the employers, and they wished to withdraw the helper from the direction of the molder, confining his work to definite and specific tasks.[6] In carrying out this policy they met opposition and evasion on the part of many journeymen. This is indicated in the numerous resolutions introduced in the national conventions providing for modifications of the rigid rules against the use of berkshires. For example, at the thirteenth convention of the International Union the following resolution was offered but rejected: "Resolved: That any member working by the piece on work that he is obliged to use the crane, shall be allowed to hire a helper to do all of his laboring work."[7] Though the union remained firm in its policy at all times, "many of the older members complained bitterly, and evaded the intent of the regulation by adopting a boy, for the union recognized the right of the journeyman to teach the trade to his own or adopted son."[8]

In like manner the employers resisted the efforts of the union to change or modify the prevailing system of work. For almost a half century there was a continuous struggle between the union and the employers on the berkshire question, involving strikes and lockouts. Gradually the berkshires were eliminated. In 1899 President Fox of the International Union reported that "the Berkshire system exists in very few of the stove shops today, and I believe the day is near at hand when it will pass away entirely."[9] Frey and Commons state that the berkshire system was entirely abolished before 1904.[10] As far as the writer has been able to determine, this statement is correct. Secretary Kleiber of the Molders' Union says that to the best of his knowledge the

[6] Iron Molders' Journal, October, 1873, p. 131.
[7] Proceedings, 1876, p. 54.
[8] Motley, p. 24.
[9] Proceedings, 1899, p. 5.
[10] "Conciliation in the Stove Industry," in Bulletin, U. S. Bureau of Labor, no. 62, January, 1906, p. 176.

berkshire system has been completely abolished in the United States in both union and non-union shops.

The abolition of the berkshire system does not mean that helpers have been done away with in the iron-molding industry. Even in the best regulated union shops helpers called "laborers" are employed to do such work as the carrying and the tearing down of flasks, and in a general way getting materials and implements ready, in order that the molder may continue uninterruptedly at the more skilled processes of molding. At times these laborers serve as helpers proper to the molders. For instance, a laborer or helper is assigned to each molder to assist him in carrying the molten iron and pouring it into the molds. In shops where heavy machinery and car wheels are molded, helpers, paid by the firm, work in intimate contact with the molders at practically every stage of the work.

In 1902 in a conference between the representatives of the Iron Molders' Union and the Stove Founders' National Defense Association, the following agreement was made with reference to helpers: "The general trend of industrial development is towards employing skilled labor, as far as practicable, at skilled work, and in conformance with this tendency every effort should be made by the members of the S. F. N. D. A. and the I. M. U. of N. A. to enable the molder to give seven hours of service per day at molding, and to encourage the use of unskilled help to perform such work as sand cutting and work of like character, when the molder can be given a full day's work."

The practice of promoting helpers to the position of molders has not ceased with the disappearance of berkshires. In shops where small castings are made the work of the helper is so remote from that of the molder that helpers have little opportunity to learn the more skilled processes of molding. In such cases the apprentice system prevails. In shops where large castings are made the helper system has completely displaced the training of apprentices. In establishments turning out a large variety of work such helpers

as show a special aptitude for molding are promoted to high-grade work, while other helpers are confined to the lower grade.

Early in the history of the iron industry in this country the boiler or puddler and the roller were recognized as having full charge of the work in their respective departments. They hired the necessary helpers and paid them. This practice was so universal that when the iron workers first organized, this system of hiring and paying the helper was accepted without question. With the introduction of the manufacture of sheet iron practically the same plan of employing helpers was adopted. Thus the system of employment was established throughout the industry.

The problems arising in connection with such a contract system of work are quite different in the manufacture of iron and steel from what they are in iron molding. This can easily be seen from the following considerations: First, the employment and payment of helpers by journeymen in the manufacture of iron and steel does not lead to an increase in the number of helpers as it does in the case of molding. A boiler or puddler, for instance, will turn out a certain product each day and can use to advantage a certain number of helpers, but to increase this number would not increase his output and would therefore be a financial loss to him. Second, an increase in the number of molders is more practicable than an increase in the number of puddlers. If helpers become efficient molders, it is an easy matter for the employers to find places for them as journeymen; but if helpers in the manufacture of iron and steel become capable of taking charge of furnaces or of rolls, journeymen's jobs cannot so easily be provided for them. The output of a mill is relatively inelastic and cannot be increased by the simple addition of more workmen. Third, the number of molding establishments is much greater than is the number of iron and steel mills, consequently there are greater opportunities for a helper in a molding shop to obtain employment as a journeyman in another. Fourth, helpers in

the manufacture of iron and steel are for the most part employed because it is physically impossible for journeymen to prosecute their work without assistance. On the other hand, helpers are employed in a foundry—except where large machinery is cast—because of the advantages of a division of labor, and they could be dispensed with.

Since the nature of the iron and steel industry makes necessary a certain number of helpers, and at the same time makes it difficult for helpers to encroach upon the work of the journeymen, it is natural that the helpers should be considered as the rightful learners of the trade and that no apprentice system should be established by the union.[11] Thus the employment and compensation of the helper can be studied as a problem, apart from the encroachment of the helper upon the work of the journeymen and from his effect on an established apprentice system.

The chief question which concerned the Iron, Steel and Tin Workers in connection with the employment and payment of helpers has not been who shall hire and pay them, but how much shall they be paid and how shall uniformity be secured in the wages of helpers doing similar work. As early as 1870, one of the leading topics at the convention of the United Sons of Vulcan was what proportion of the wages received by a workman should be passed on to his helpers. A petition submitted to this convention proposed that helpers' wages "shall be uniform, and that no more than one-third shall be paid one Helper, nor more than one half of what the furnace makes shall be paid to two Helpers."[12] The committee to which this proposition was referred spoke of it as "a good one, and one long desired—one that your Committee would be much pleased to see in successful operation everywhere. But to make it uniform through the action of this National Forge would be impracticable. Wages of

[11] In the early days of the union some restrictions were placed upon the promotion of helpers. Thus in 1881 the Association passed the following resolution: "Each puddler helper must help one year and be six months a member of the Association before he be allowed the privilege of boiling a heat" (Proceedings, p. 682).

[12] Vulcan Record, vol. i, no. 6, 1870, p. 20.

Helpers have been, and we presume will be, controlled by circumstances, as they exist in respective localities. If all were a unit upon the subject, its successful inauguration could be hoped for; but as certain localities have certain rules upon the subject, we can barely expect much uniformity—hence the impropriety of adopting any measure at present looking to that end. That a Helper should receive more than one-third, no reasonable person would assert, for when we consider that the Helper is as it were, an apprentice learning the business, one-third is ample; and by a strict adherence to this policy, the Helper himself would derive the full advantages of his trade, when completed to take charge of a furnace. But your Committee would commit the subject to the consideration of the various Subordinate Forges, suggesting that they adopt such regulations relative thereto, as the circumstances will warrant."[13]

This report was adopted, but it led to no definite action, and the same subject continued to be prominent at all conventions of the National Forge. The "one-third and five per cent" rule was gradually adopted in the various districts, and finally became a regulation of the Amalgamated Association.[14] Since then, rules have been adopted for the uniform payment of helpers in all departments.

While the union has accepted the customary mode of paying helpers, there has been a tendency in recent years to drift away from this method and to demand that all helpers be paid by the firm. There are two assignable reasons for this. In the first place, payment by the journeyman is inconvenient to both helper and journeyman. In the second place, with such a system it is difficult to maintain a uniform wage rate for helpers doing the same class of work. Even though the union fix a rate for the payment of all helpers, such a scale is difficult to enforce. If the helpers are not members of the union, as was true in the case of the United Sons of Vulcan, they felt in no wise bound to abide by the

[13] Vulcan Record, vol. i, no. 6, 1870, p. 20.

[14] D. A. McCabe, "The Standard Rate in American Trade Unions," in Johns Hopkins University Studies, ser. xxx, no. 2, p. 63.

union scale for their payment. Since the contractors or heads of the various teams are practically compelled to have help, in times of general activity when labor is scarce the helpers are likely to force from their employers a higher rate than provided for in the union scale. On the other hand, if times are dull and help is plentiful, the journeymen contractors will be inclined to take advantage of their superior bargaining power, and will pay helpers less than is provided for by the union. With helpers as members of the union, this violation of the union scale is checked only as far as helpers refuse to break the laws of their organization. With so many employers, competition is sure to produce variable and non-uniform wages for helpers. Especially is this true since evasion is difficult of detection, being known only to the two parties to the wage contract. When the helper is paid from the office such evasion is made more difficult. The rate of pay for all helpers is inserted in the wage scale, and the only way of violating it is by rebate paid to the head of a team or by additional wages paid to the helper.

While the union favors the payment of all helpers by the firm, it does not favor the hiring of the helpers by the firm. For years there has been a clause in the national constitution providing that "all men are to have the privilege of hiring their own helpers without dictation from the management."[15] Since each workman is in close personal contact with his helpers, and since each workman is responsible for the work done by the team of which he is the head, the union deems it advisable to give every man the privilege of selecting his own assistants. This plan of allowing the men to choose their own helpers gives the journeymen a strong leverage for drawing helpers into the union and forcing them to accept the wage rate provided for helpers.

Another union which has taken an active stand against the payment of helpers by the journeymen is the Glass Bottle Blowers' Association. One of the principal questions be-

[15] Constitution, 1912, art. xvii, sec. 21.

fore the first convention of Glass Bottle Blowers in 1856 concerned the new method of work then being introduced, namely, the system of having blowers hire their own helpers. This practice was condemned as an infringement upon the apprentice system, and the convention passed a rule that no blower should employ a helper for less than the standard rate of wages.[16] Two years later the convention adopted the further resolution: "We will not work in any factory with anyone who has a molder or finisher or an assistant in making bottles or vials or for other purposes than gathering glass, except such assistant be a regular journeyman or apprentice to the business."[17] This policy prevailed, and it has been customary for a long time for the helpers in bottle factories to be paid by the manufacturers.

The Window Glass Workers have also gone on record as opposed to the payment of helpers by journeymen. The by-laws of 1908 provide that "no flattener shall be allowed to pay any part of layer-out's wages, or any help that may be employed about the flattening house."[18] At the convention of this same year the following resolution was adopted: "That it be the sense of this convention that the firms should pay the snappers' wages." The manufacturers appear to have accepted this rule with little dissent.[19]

In striking contrast with the unions above discussed, the United Brotherhood of Operative Potters has never taken a positive stand against the hiring and the paying of helpers by the journeymen. For example, the journeyman jigger-man hires and pays his batter-out, his mold-runner, and his finisher. This system prevails universally in the pottery industry, and though there has been no serious opposition to it, the Brotherhood of Operative Potters in 1912 proposed to the Western Manufacturers' Association that contract labor should be abolished in all branches of the trade.[20]

To the journeyman potter the most unsatisfactory phase

[16] Bulletin, U. S. Bureau of Labor, no. 67, November, 1906, p. 749.
[17] Ibid., p. 750.
[18] Constitution and By-laws, 1908, art. xvii, sec. 44.
[19] Joint Scale of Wages, November, 1903, to June, 1904, sec. 25.
[20] Bulletin, U. S. Bureau of Labor, no. 67, November, 1906, p. 751.

of the system of contract work is that a standard wage for helpers has not proved successful. The helpers refuse to join the union of the journeymen employers and are therefore under no obligations to accept a standard rate of pay determined by the union. The helpers are always ready to higgle for higher wages; and since journeymen must have helpers to carry on their work profitably, they too become higglers. As a result the wage scale for helpers is continually violated and the journeymen's wages are uncertain in amount.

That the hiring of helpers by journeymen has not caused as much dissatisfaction among the potters as in some other trades is doubtless because pottery factories are so localized that they are well under union control and because the nature of the industry is such that there is an exact division of work. This fixes definitely the number of helpers to be employed, and prevents the gradual transfer of the journeymen's work to the helpers. Moreover, the growth of potteries in the United States has been rapid, and the large number of learners has not tended in the same degree to lower wages.

CHAPTER III

The Organization of the Helper

Labor organizations in the United States have been formed largely in accordance with the theory that trade rather than industrial lines should determine the boundaries of a union. Following out this policy of having only workmen of like kind in an organization, it was until recently the common practice for those craftsmen considered masters of all the work of a trade to exclude from their organization all auxiliary workmen.

This practice of skilled workmen excluding from their organizations unskilled and semi-skilled co-workers has been defended chiefly on the ground that only in this way could the welfare of the trade be assured. Since the interests of those engaged in a single trade but at different grades of work are not always identical but are frequently conflicting, it has been contended that an organization made up of both journeymen and helpers would be subject to frequent dissensions, enabling the employers to play one class of workmen against another, to the detriment of the union. This argument is not without force. Internal dissensions might arise over the passage of union rules and regulations, or over collective bargaining with the employers. For instance, in determining what wages shall be demanded for union workmen, both journeymen and helpers, it is quite probable that there would be no consensus of opinion as to the difference which should exist between the wages of the mechanic and those of his helper. When an agreement is being made with employers, this difference of opinion as to the relative wages of the skilled and the unskilled classes might be a source of contention which would cause disruption of the union. The president

of the Tile Layers realized the difficulties which face any union composed of both helpers and journeymen when he said: "By the acquisition of the helpers the international union faces the problem of legislating virtually for two trades under one jurisdiction."[1]

In some trades the policy of the skilled craftsmen of allowing as little work as possible to be done by auxiliary workmen and of opposing any advance on the part of such workmen may have had influence in determining the policy of craftsmen in excluding helpers from their organization. Obviously, it is inconsistent for journeymen to oppose both the employment and the promotion of helpers and at the same time to admit them to an organization which is supposed to seek impartially the welfare of all its members. The preamble to the constitution of the United Association of Journeymen Plumbers, Gas Fitters, Steam Fitters and Steam Fitters' Helpers asserts that "the aspirations of this Association are to construct an organization which shall subserve the interests of all its members." In view of this statement and of the fact that the plumbers' union has been so strenuously opposed to the employment and, where employed, to the promotion of helpers, it would be surprising if this same union should provide for the organization of the helpers in the trade.

Craft pride, together with the belief that recognition of the helpers as members would impair a vested right, was no doubt of considerable force in causing skilled artisans of many unions to refuse their less skilled associates admission into their organizations. Evidence of this can be found in the convention proceedings of almost any union in which there has been an attempt to provide for the organization of auxiliary workmen. For instance, when the Machinists were contemplating a change in their constitution so as to make handymen eligible for membership, there were many objections, some of which were wholly the result of craft pride. One delegate said: "If you are in favor of taking

[1] Proceedings, 1903, p. 17.

in the handyman you must remember that the general feeling in our organization is opposed to being put on an equal basis with the handyman."[2] Another said: "We do not want to lose sight of the fact that we belong to the International Association of Machinists, not of handymen. If we take in these men we will have to change our name to the International Association of Machinists and Handymen."[3]

At this point it is important to note the policy of the American Federation of Labor with respect to the organization of the helper. Secretary Morrison, in answer to an inquiry as to the principles which guide the Federation in deciding whether helpers shall have a national organization independent of the journeymen's unions, replied: "It depends wholly on the judgment as to what relationship will be most advantageous to all concerned. As you are aware, the helper is closely related to the journeyman. One of the objects of the Federation is to bring the members of the various crafts and callings into the closest possible relationship for mutual co-operation. Before the system of specialization was developed to such a high degree as prevails in modern industry, the journeymen of the various trades were all-around mechanics, and there was a wide gulf between the labor of the journeymen and the labor of the helper. This placed them in distinct classes. The development of specialization has frittered the skill of a mechanic in the all-around sense; in other words, in the present system, a workman is trained in a certain branch of the trade and does not become skilled in all of its branches. This specialization requires a much shorter apprenticeship and the helper can be more readily fitted to take up the work and, hence, he is more nearly a competitor than was the case under the former conditions. This transition in the work has brought the journeymen and the helper into closer relationship and the action of the different national organi-

[2] Machinists' Monthly Journal, July, 1903, p. 588.
[3] Ibid., p. 587.

zations in organizing their helpers under their jurisdiction is a result of this condition. An International organization in a trade is recognized by the A. F. of L. as having entire jurisdiction over that trade. The helper of a trade belongs to a trade, and consequently any claim of an International union to the helper in a trade over which it has jurisdiction must have a prior recognition."[4]

This lengthy quotation illustrates the striking contrast between the policy of most of the early national unions of artisans in refusing to organize in conjunction with helpers, and the policy of the American Federation of Labor in seeking to bring helpers and journeymen into a closer relationship and, if possible, into the same union. The significance of these two opposing policies will receive further attention. It is sufficient to say here that they have led to the two main modes of organizing helpers. One of these is to organize them independently of the journeymen, and the other is to organize them under the jurisdiction of the journeymen's union.

There are four classes of helpers' organizations which have no connection with the unions of skilled artisans: (1) local unions entirely independent of any other body; (2) national organizations independent of the American Federation of Labor; (3) local unions affiliated directly with the Federation of Labor; and (4) national organizations affiliated with the Federation of Labor.

(1) Before the rapid growth of the Knights of Labor in the late seventies and the organization of the American Federation of Labor in 1881, it was owing to the refusal of journeymen to receive helpers into their organizations that such auxiliary workmen, if organized at all, had no connection with the journeymen's unions. Little information concerning the organization of the helpers at this early period is extant, yet that which does exist shows that in certain trades they were actually organizing themselves independently of the mechanics' organizations. As early as

[4] In letter to the writer.

1871 mention is found of a union of blacksmiths' helpers in Albany, New York. It appears that this union had been in existence for some time prior to the above date and was desirous of corresponding with other helpers, organized and unorganized, with a view to calling a national convention in order to organize a national association.[5] The plan seems never to have crystallized, and for the time being blacksmiths' helpers, where organized, remained in independent local unions.

Another group of helpers who early had local unions were the assistants of the iron boilers or puddlers. In 1871 the puddlers' helpers at New Albany, Indiana, thanked helpers for financial assistance to the amount of $149, given to them during a strike.[6] The fact that puddlers' helpers held meetings, called strikes, and paid benefits indicates the existence of some kind of local organization. Two years later, in 1873, the puddlers' helpers in Chicago went on strike against the wishes of the puddlers. From the report of the president of the United Sons of Vulcan it is evident that these helpers had an organization of their own.[7] Indeed, though the American Federation of Labor discourages the formation of such local lodges, helpers even at the present time often organize themselves into independent local unions.

Helpers organized under the jurisdiction of the Federation of Labor frequently secede and become independent organizations. The tendency of helpers, especially of unskilled helpers or laborers, to secede from the Federation or to form an independent organization seems much greater than is the case with skilled workmen. Secretary Morrison of the Federation attributes this to the foreign element among the helper class of workmen.[8] As a rule, the foreigners engaged in such work are of an emotional temperament, and yield readily to the persuasive powers of

[5] Machinists and Blacksmiths' Journal, July, 1871, p. 272.
[6] Vulcan Record, December 31, 1871, p. 18.
[7] Proceedings, 1873, p. 11.
[8] In letter to the writer.

ambitious persons who seek to obtain positions of leadership by organizing unaffiliated unions or by having those secede which are affiliated. Many such local unions—for example, the Polish laborers in Toledo and the Polish and Italian laborers in Buffalo—are composed exclusively of foreigners.

In other cases, independent local organizations have come into existence because the helpers were not satisfied with the conditions under which they were to be transferred from the jurisdiction of the Federation of Labor to that of the journeymen's organizations. Thus in 1911, when the International Association of Machinists provided for the organization of helpers under their jurisdiction, the Federation of Labor transferred the local unions of Machinists' Helpers to the International Association of Machinists. The helpers, who had no hand in this transfer of jurisdiction and who were not on the whole pleased with the status they were to have under the Machinists, preferred in many instances to form independent local bodies rather than to become attached to the Machinists.[9]

It is claimed that low dues have had considerable influence in inclining helpers to independent rather than to affiliated unions. Auxiliary workmen, especially the remote helpers, are often a shifting class, and do not see that they are benefited by a strong treasury. Speaking of the independent local unions of hod-carriers and building laborers of New York, the president of the International Union of Hod Carriers and Building Laborers said that these workmen could be persuaded to come into the International Union but for the extremely low dues which they pay in the independent union.[10]

(2) Though the blacksmiths' helpers in 1871 and the puddlers' helpers in 1873 made efforts to form national organizations, their plans never materialized, and all

[9] Interview with the president of the International Association of Machinists.

[10] Official Journal [Hod Carriers and Building Laborers], April, 1907, p. 5.

national organizations of helpers independent of the American Federation have come into existence since the formation of the Federation of Labor and represent the results of some dissatisfaction with the Federation. According to a writer in the official journal of the International Hod Carriers and Building Laborers' Union of America, "the first laborers' union organized in America as an international union was established in the State of Massachusetts some eighteen or twenty years ago."[11] Since that time a number of independent national unions of building laborers have been formed, prominent among which have been the International Laborers' Union, with headquarters at Dayton, Ohio, and the International Building Laborers' Protective Union of Lowell, Massachusetts.

Independent unions of laborers or helpers, whether local or national, as a rule have not prospered. Their weakness is traceable to several causes. In the first place, helpers are for the most part either boys or second-rate men, neither of whom possess executive ability sufficient to guide a union with any degree of success. Taking advantage of this lack of leaders among the laborers, demagogues having at heart their own welfare rather than that of the workmen gain control of the unions and exploit them at their will.[12]

In the second place, the ephemeral character of independent unions of auxiliary workmen is accentuated by the obstacles thrown in the way of permanent organization by the American Federation of Labor and the unions affiliated with it, which wage unceasing warfare against the organization and existence of such unions. Dr. N. R. Whitney, who has made a careful study of the contests between the affiliated and the independent organizations, says: "A great deal of time and attention has been expended during the past few years by the American Federation of Labor and the Building Trades Department in an effort to bring about

[11] September, 1906, p. 5.

[12] See, for instance, Official Journal of the International Hod Carriers and Building Laborers' Union of America, July, 1906, pp. 7–8.

an effective national union among the hod carriers and building laborers. Many dual local unions existed in various parts of the country, some of which had never been part of the national union, while others had seceded from it. The Federation used its influence to force all of these local unions to affiliate with the Hod Carriers, and considerable progress has been made toward the accomplishment of this purpose."[13]

(3) Since the organization of the American Federation of Labor, local unions of helpers affiliated with this body have been numerous. The Federation has been especially active in organizing those workmen whose organization is not provided for by the national unions having jurisdiction over the trades in which such workmen are employed. Whenever there are indications that the helpers in a trade or in a group of allied trades in a certain locality can maintain a lodge, an organizer seeks to bring them together, under a charter granted by the Federation, either into a federal labor union or a helpers' union representing a particular trade. A local union thus chartered may subsequently be disposed of in any one of the following ways: It may be transferred to the jurisdiction of some existing national union; a number of such affiliated local unions may be combined into a national organization, chartered by the Federation; or it may remain directly affiliated with the Federation under the charter originally granted to it.

Whenever a national union of journeymen seeks to bring under its jurisdiction its helpers, who have been hitherto excluded, it is the policy of the American Federation of Labor to sever direct connection with any local union of such workmen. Thus the boiler makers' helpers in 1900 and the machinists' helpers in 1911 were transferred from the American Federation of Labor to the national unions of the above-mentioned trades.

The American Federation of Labor does not relinquish

[13] "Jurisdiction in American Building-Trades Unions," in Johns Hopkins Studies, ser. xxxii, no. 1, p. 76.

its right to organize helpers under its own jurisdiction unless the national unions with which such local unions are affiliated have made provision for organizing the helpers of their respective trades as members of the international organizations. In 1903 when the International Association of Machinists was discussing the question of organizing the machinists' helpers into an affiliated association, Delegate Keegan said: "On the auxiliary question we have just had a little experience previous to coming to this convention. An organizer of the American Federation of Labor floated into the town, Altoona, where I come from. He organized a Federated Labor Lodge and took in what we call the handyman, and everything went well enough for six months or a year. Then our association said, 'These people belong to us,' and made protest to the International President to maintain our position. The president sent me down there and I found it was harder to get them into our organization after they had joined the American Federation of Labor than if they had never been in any. The handyman and even the machinists preferred to stay in the A. F. L. because they could get in for fifty cents, whereas they would have to pay us three dollars."[14]

Whether true or not, the idea prevailed among the machinists at that time that the American Federation of Labor would not yield its jurisdiction over helpers unless the Machinists took them in as members on an equal footing with the journeymen. For instance, Delegate Sullivan said: "You are talking about an auxiliary. You will then have the greatest fight on your hands you ever had. You will mix in with the American Federation of Labor. They have a right under their charter to all those handymen but if you will put them into your organization on an equal basis you will overcome this."[15]

If there is a clear line of cleavage between the work of a mechanic and his helper, with little probability of transition

[14] Proceedings, 1903, p. 589.
[15] Ibid., p. 588.

from the work of one to that of the other, the Federation of Labor does not oppose the organization of helpers into a separate union. Extreme caution on the part of the Federation becomes necessary at this point in order to avoid jurisdictional disputes. There is continual strife between certain trades because of such disputes, and certainly contentions of this character between two unions whose members work hand to hand at all times would be much greater than between two unions with fairly well defined trade lines. For instance, if the blacksmiths' helpers in 1903 had been organized, as some suggested, into a national union, chartered by the Federation of Labor, it is highly probable that there would have been constant friction between the blacksmiths and the helpers. Every introduction of a new piece of machinery or of a new process would be the occasion for a redistribution of work between the two national bodies.

(4) Secretary Morrison of the American Federation of Labor states[16] that the Federation had never refused a charter to helpers desiring an international union of their own. But the fact that low-grade helpers, such as the building laborers and the foundry employees, have been organized into national unions while helpers of a far higher type, as the machinists', the blacksmiths', and the boiler makers' helpers, have not been organized into a national union, suggests that the Federation has not given the same encouragement to all helpers.

The two national unions which have been chartered by the Federation are the International Hod Carriers and Building Laborers' Union of America and the International Brotherhood of Foundry Employees. The important fact to be noted in connection with these organizations, especially the former, is that trade lines are not observed in their formation. Inasmuch as laborers change so rapidly from one trade to another, it is more satisfactory to group those in closely allied trades into one body. This

[16] In letter to the writer.

arrangement avoids the frequent changes in membership which would be necessary were the laborers organized according to the trades, and it makes the union more stable. As Secretary Morrison says: "The helpers in the Building trades have organized close together because of their close relationship in the work and the advantage of this form of organization. If the laborers of the various crafts in the building industry were divided, you can readily realize that it would bring about the formation of several organizations instead of the present concrete organization that now exists among them."[17]

An important phase of the matter, whether deliberately planned by the Federation or not, is the fact that by thus organizing building laborers in a general labor union there is no danger of serious controversies with a building-trade union. Being a complex body of laborers from different trades, other matters than jurisdictional disputes engage their attention. Moreover, this form of organization gives a union jurisdiction over certain classes rather than over any specific part of a trade. The craft unions are thus left in undisputed possession of their respective trades. On the other hand, if the helpers in a trade, especially the more skilled ones, were given a national charter, there would, of necessity, be a division in jurisdiction between journeymen and helpers, with a likelihood of endless jurisdictional disputes.

The policy of the journeymen in certain trades in not taking helpers under their jurisdiction or into their organization, and the policy of the Federation in not organizing into separate national unions those helpers who tend to encroach directly upon the work of the mechanics, have prevented, in some instances for long periods, skilled helpers or semi-skilled mechanics from organizing a national association of their own. Thus the unskilled building laborers and the foundry employees enjoyed the privilege of national associations as early as 1904, while the helpers in the machine shops

[17] In letter to the writer.

up until 1911 were forced, if organized in connection with the Federation, to content themselves with local organization.

The older unions formerly gave little attention to organizing helpers. In recent years, however, unions composed of skilled craftsmen have with one or two exceptions changed their policy and have made some provision for the organization of auxiliary workmen.

The forces instrumental in bringing about such a change may be summed up as follows: (1) a clearer recognition of the common interests of mechanics and their helpers; (2) inability of journeymen to control the helpers as long as the helpers are unorganized or organized independently of the journeymen's organizations; (3) an increasing division of labor. It can be readily seen that these forces do not act exclusively of one another. The common interests of the two classes growing out of a close association in work and an approaching equality in skill have made it difficult for the journeymen to control the situation because the helpers have become their competitors. Likewise, division of labor has been the great factor in breaking down the barrier of skill between journeymen and helpers and has thus developed an increasing community of interest between the two classes.

(1) The common interest of helpers and journeymen grows out of both an intimate, dependent association in work and like relation to a common employer. A potter who uses a jigger for making dishes employs three assistants—a batter-out, a mold runner, and a finisher. If a jiggerman lacks any or all of these assistants, his work is hampered. He must either perform all the duties connected with the work which falls within the jurisdiction of a jiggerman, or combine with other jiggermen who are likewise short of helpers. In the latter case skilled workmen, working at piece rates, are forced to do work which they had expected to have done by helpers, and consequently they receive helpers' wages for it. In the former case, the jiggermen not only labor under this disadvantage, but they also lose much time

in changing from one occupation to another. In either event, earnings are greatly reduced. On the other hand, if the jiggermen are kept from work in any way, their helpers are left unemployed. Doubtless this mutual dependence in work has in many trades turned the balance in favor of united organization;[18] at least, union leaders who have favored the admission of helpers into journeymen's unions strongly emphasize this point. Thus, the president of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers has stated: "This being true, that is the less skilled workman must assist the more skillful workman to enable him to complete or finish the work at which both perform a proportionate amount of labor according to the skill required; therefore, I deem it advisable to admit all that are directly working at jobs necessary to keep a train of rolls running or a furnace working that furnishes iron for a train of rolls, otherwise, there may and can be trouble expected almost at any time if that class of labor is not made eligible to membership."[19]

The second element affecting the common interest of journeymen and their assistants is their relation to a common employer. Journeymen and helpers have the same hours of work, the same shop conditions, sanitary and otherwise, and a common employer upon whom demands must be made for any change in working rules or for an increase in wages. Responding to recent agitation, the slogan of many trade unionists has become solidarity, at least to the extent of combining all the workmen of a single trade into one body. Acting on the principle that in union there is strength, many artisans have put in the background their former policy of having skilled craftsmen only in their organization, and now advocate the admission of helpers. Secretary

[18] Although the pottery industry furnishes an excellent example of the common interests of journeymen and helpers growing out of an intimate relation in work, it should be noted that the helpers have not as a rule availed themselves of the privilege of joining the Brotherhood of Potters. This is due to the fact that they are employed and paid by the journeymen.

[19] Proceedings, 1887, p. 1953.

Gilthorpe of the Boiler Makers declares: "As the example of organization throughout the world is to consolidate and solidify, I would strongly urge the admission of holders on and helpers into this brotherhood."[20]

(2) While skilled mechanics of broader views have argued in favor of the organization under a single charter of all workmen within a trade, the chief reason why most journeymen have come to favor the organization of journeymen and helpers in the same union is that experience has taught them that it is difficult if not impossible to control the shops if their helpers, especially the more skilled, are unorganized or are organized independently of their more skilled co-workers. The plan of leaving helpers to look out for themselves having failed to bring about desired results, the next move has been to organize them in some relation to the craftsmen of the respective trades. That self-regarding rather than benevolent motives have actuated the journeymen in this change of policy appears not only in the expressions of various union leaders on the subject and in the fact that helpers have not been admitted until after repeated attempts to control them in other ways have failed, but in the order in which the different classes of helpers have been admitted and in the restrictions upon the privileges of helpers when admitted.

One of the commonest arguments used in persuading artisans to admit helpers into their organizations is that such a plan will better enable the journeymen to control the helpers and thus eliminate the evils incident to their employment. A few examples will illustrate this point. The president of the Iron, Steel and Tin Workers said that, judging the future by the past, there was trouble in store for the association unless it should legislate so as to have complete control of all men working in and around mills.[21] In advocating extension of membership, the secretary of the Boiler Makers asserts: "When this brotherhood has within its fold all who

[20] Journal of the Brotherhood of Boiler Makers, August 1, 1900, p. 235.

[21] Proceedings, 1887, p. 1953.

earn their living at the trade, won't we be better able to control all encroachments both numerically and financially by reason of our numbers and increased revenues?"[22] More radical than these expressions on the subject are the words of a delegate who argued as follows in favor of the taking of handymen under the jurisdiction of the machinists: "We are only trying to get the handy-man under our control, so we can put him out of existence."[23]

In considering the motives that have influenced journeymen in admitting helpers, it is significant that the unions making such a change have not done so until after vain efforts have been made in other ways to control the helpers. For instance, the Blacksmiths, the Boiler Makers, and the Machinists tried in every conceivable manner to check the encroachment of the helpers, both in work and in numbers, before reaching the conclusion that it is good policy to have the helpers connected with their respective organizations.

Further proof that the dominant motive influencing the artisan has been a desire to benefit himself rather than the helper is the fact that in those trades where there are different grades of helpers those who had been giving the journeymen most trouble were admitted first. The handymen or advanced helpers were taken in by the Machinists in 1903,[24] but not until 1911[25] were the helpers proper made eligible for membership, while the general helpers or laborers are still unorganized. Similarly, the Iron, Steel and Tin Workers admitted some of their more advanced helpers into the union in 1876,[26] but not till 1889 did this union open its doors to all men employed in and about iron and steel mills.[27] It is difficult to believe that the Marble Workers have interested themselves in organizing the helpers primarily for the benefit of the helper, because the Marble Workers persistently

[22] Journal of the Brotherhood of Boiler Makers, October, 1900, pp. 333–334.
[23] Machinists' Monthly Journal, July, 1903, p. 587.
[24] Ibid., pp. 586–588.
[25] Proceedings, 1911, p. 86; Constitution, 1912, p. 57.
[26] Proceedings, 1877, p. 50.
[27] Proceedings, 1889, p. 2686.

refuse to allow their helpers any legal entrance to the position of a journeyman, and hence deny them admission to the journeymen's local unions.[28]

In a preceding chapter attention has been called to the fact that helpers make it difficult for the journeymen in a trade to control the shops of that trade because helpers act as strike breakers and increase the number of non-union shops. The belief that the helpers are especially liable to act thus contrary to the will and interest of the journeymen has led many artisans to favor the organization of journeymen and helpers in the same national union. The likelihood that helpers will act in opposition to journeymen when organized apart from them is well illustrated in a difficulty between the puddlers and their helpers in Chicago. When the iron puddlers organized as the United Sons of Vulcan, only those who were capable of taking charge of a furnace were eligible to membership. Trouble soon arose because the helpers would not, or at least did not, always go out on strike with the puddlers. The reason commonly ascribed for this failure to give support was that the helpers had no organization and no strike benefits.[29] At the convention of 1872 the president urged that helpers be admitted to the union in order to overcome this difficulty. But the committee on the good of the order, instead of reporting favorably upon this proposal, recommended that the helpers be assessed for strike benefits one half the amount assessed puddlers, and that in case of a strike the helpers receive a like proportion of strike benefits.[30] This plan was adopted, and appears to have worked successfully. In Chicago, however, when the helpers were called together and the above scheme was explained, they rejected the project of the puddlers and formed an association of their own. Later, when a new workman was put on in opposition to the wishes of this organized body of helpers, a strike was declared. The puddlers at great inconvenience to themselves contin-

[28] The Marble Worker, August, 1911, pp. 200–201.
[29] Vulcan Record, August, 1872, p. 23.
[30] Ibid., p. 48.

ued to work. The helpers, thus deprived of employment, went to Knightsville, Indiana, and took the places of the boilers who were on strike at that time.[31]

Conflicts with helpers affiliated directly with the American Federation of Labor have doubtless had weight in inducing national unions of journeymen to favor the extension of jurisdiction to the helpers of their respective trades. This is clearly seen in the experience of the Blacksmiths. Many appeals and inquiries came to the Blacksmiths after the convention of 1901 in regard to organizing the helpers. The reply given was in the nature of a recommendation to organize the helpers and to send to the American Federation of Labor for a charter. Soon thirty or forty local unions of helpers were chartered by the Federation. Then trouble began. Demands on employers were made without the consent of the blacksmiths. Strikes were declared, and the blacksmiths were compelled to quit work or work with non-union helpers. Finally, it was decided to submit to a referendum vote the question of admitting helpers into the Blacksmiths' Union.[32]

(3) The recognition of the common interests of helpers and journeymen, and more especially the failure of journeymen to control helpers and the shops in which they work, have been the immediate causes of a change in the policy of unions of journeymen wtih respect to the organization of helpers. It is, however, essential to note that this common interest, as well as the inability of the journeymen to control the shops, has not remained constant during the transition from one policy to another. Changes in objective conditions, summed up in the phrases "division of labor" or "specialization in work," have operated. In other words, there has been an increase in the common interests of mechanics and helpers, and an increase in the difficulties in the control of the shops by the journeymen because of a more extended division of labor. Secretary Morrison of the Federation of Labor has said that this transition in work has

[31] Proceedings, 1873, pp. 11, 12.
[32] Proceedings, 1903, p. 14.

brought journeymen and helpers into closer relations, and the action of the different national organizations in organizing the helpers under their jurisdiction is a result of this condition. This change of method in economic production has been a remote rather than an immediate cause of the journeymen's change of policy. A closer analysis of the change in economic production is necessary in order to understand just why and how such a change should effect a corresponding change in the theory and practice of organizing the workmen in a trade.

In the first place, the two great evils incident to the employment of helpers—trade disintegration and an overcrowded trade—are greatly intensified as the division of labor becomes more minute. Where specialization in work is the rule, the system in which an artisan learns all branches of a trade is sure to decay. Under such conditions, the helper, provided he be not handicapped by mental or physical disabilities, is practically certain to become an efficient workman at the operation at which he assists. The result is that soon a large part of the work of a shop is done by those workmen who have never served an apprenticeship in the full sense of the word. In short, specialization in trades and processes where helpers are employed has transferred the work of the trained, all-round mechanic to the specialist. With this increase in the number of helper-trained workmen and consequent decrease in the relative number of all-round mechanics, it is evident that the journeymen must lose some control formerly exercised over the shops. To regain this control, they must widen their union so as to include not only those who have become specialists by serving as helpers, but also the helpers themselves. A writer in the Blacksmiths' Journal, realizing the significance of these changes, wrote: "We have made tools, formers and machinery, and the boy and the helper are using them in ever increasing numbers, with a more than corresponding decrease in blacksmiths . . . the apprentice system seems to be becoming obsolete, many corporations preferring to

advance helpers to run the forge and the furnaces. . . . Undoubtedly this method is come to stay and we must sooner or later acknowledge it and organize ourselves accordingly. In many parts of the country where our unions are established there are very few eligible members and it becomes somewhat burdensome to maintain a good working union and be strong enough to make any demand and expect to get it, and then should any trouble occur, the corporations can, would, and do get along for months, if necessary, with helpers, heaters and helper-smiths. This is the weak point in our armor where we could be easily defeated and our employers understand this."[33]

The effect of increasing division of labor and of the introduction of machinery upon the policy of journeymen with respect to the organization of the helper is illustrated by the extension of the boundaries of the International Association of Machinists to include within its jurisdiction all employees of a machine shop except unskilled helpers or laborers. Within the last two decades the nature of the work done and the skill required in a machine shop have undergone a great change. Whereas a few years ago machinists' work consisted of a few general processes—turning, fitting, and setting up—now with the introduction of specialized machinery and tools, machinists' work has come to consist of specialized jobs. With the introduction of these labor-saving devices it is no longer necessary that every man in a machine shop shall know how to use efficiently each tool or machine therein. Nor is it necessary for him to serve a long term of apprenticeship in order to operate a machine. The result has been that the regular apprentice-trained machinists have lost a large part of the work in the shops.

In 1903, in order to overcome this difficulty, the president of the International Association of Machinists advocated the admission of workmen other than journeymen into membership. He said: "The difficulty we are constantly confronted with is to decide in what consists machinists' work.

[33] June, 1901, p. 13.

For instance, in some locomotive shops machinists do steam-pipe work and the building of engine works, while in others this work is performed exclusively by the 'handyman.' There should be drawn a definite line so that members of our organization should know their constitutional rights, and feel that they will be considered in the fulfilment of the same. In my opinion we can not completely solve this problem until we have taken entire control of the machine shop, when we will be in a position to make an agreement covering the employment of all who work therein."[34]

Though not going as far as advised by the president, the Machinists provided for the admission of specialized workmen into the union.[35] The jurisdiction of the Machinists as thus enlarged included twenty-five distinct classes of workmen. The handyman and helper questions continued to be the leading topics at conventions. Gradually other specialists such as machine tenders were made eligible for membership. Finally, in 1911 arrangements were made for the organization of helpers in local unions chartered by the International Association of Machinists.[36]

Up to this point the discussion of the organization of the helper has centered about those unions of artisans which in their early history refused to provide in any way for the organization of their helpers. Certain unions, however, have pursued a different policy. The Mine Workers, for example, from the first were organized on an industrial basis and claimed jurisdiction over all work about the mines. Certain unions organized after the barrier between journeymen and helpers had begun to disappear and after apprentice regulations had lost some of their sanctity made provision at the time of their formation for the organization of helpers in some definite relation to the journeymen. The Electrical Workers, the Elevator Constructors, and the Steam Fitters

[34] Quoted in Bulletin, U. S. Bureau of Labor, no. 67, November, 1906, p. 689.
[35] Machinists' Monthly Journal, July, 1903, pp. 586–589.
[36] Proceedings, 1911, p. 86; Constitution, 1912, p. 37.

were organized on this basis, and have never expressed particular dissatisfaction with this policy.

When an organized body of mechanics has once decided that it will be advantageous to organize its helpers, the next important considerations are the general plan of organization and the status of the helper in his relation to the journeymen. Various plans, differing in detail, have been tried; but in the present discussion these may be distinguished as the plan of having helpers and journeymen in separate local unions, and the plan of having them in the same local unions.

Certain general arguments have been advanced in favor of each of these plans. It is claimed by those who favor the plan of having the journeymen and helpers in separate local unions that the presence of two or more distinct classes of workmen in a local union is not conducive to harmony between the different classes. Since there are many matters which concern a single class of workmen, it is argued that these matters can be more satisfactorily discussed when the journeymen and the helpers meet in separate local lodges. Again, the journeymen, especially those in the more skilled handicrafts, look with disfavor upon the admission of helpers into their local unions, because such a step seems to them to be a complete breaking down of all lines between the skilled and the unskilled workman.

On the other hand, it is claimed by those who favor the plan of having helpers and journeymen in the same local unions that as long as the workmen in a trade meet as distinct classes in separate local bodies there will exist a strong class spirit which will manifest itself in friction between the local unions, and that local misunderstandings will be carried into the national conventions where the two classes meet in a single body. It is further argued that many trivial grievances will arise as long as there are two classes of local organizations under the jurisdiction of a single national union, and that these imaginary wrongs will disappear and the classes come to appreciate each other more if thrown

together frequently in local meetings. Another argument put forth by those who favor the single organization plan is that it does not result in conflicting demands upon employers. It is, of course, admitted that in a local union composed of journeymen and helpers, questions may arise concerning which these two classes have opposing views; but these questions are threshed out in the union meetings.

The experiences of the Boiler Makers afford opportunity for an estimate of the comparative merits of the two plans of organization. In 1900 the Boiler Makers made provision for taking helpers into the local unions of boiler makers,[37] but in 1901 it was decided to withdraw the helpers from the journeymen's lodges and to form helpers' lodges.[38] Finally, in 1912 arrangements were made to do away with helpers' lodges and to take helpers again into the journeymen's local unions.[39] President Gilthorpe of the Boiler Makers, when questioned as to the reasons for this last change, replied: "The reason that we have consolidated the helpers and the Boiler Makers is this: They are one trade with several branches, and we understood if they were all together we could control the trade better. Originally it was the same as today, all branches together. New men came into the convention and the first change was made, but it was never satisfactory at any time."[40]

The above arguments are in the main applicable to all organizations alike, and it is difficult to tell just why some unions have chosen one of the above plans and some the other. Undoubtedly, however, sentimental forces have been more important factors in some instances than in others in favor of separate local organizations for helpers. Journeymen who in times past opposed the employment or the promotion of helpers and who set much store upon the skill of their craft can more easily be brought to accept the helpers as members of their national unions than they can to

[37] Journal of the Brotherhood of Boiler Makers, August 1, 1900, p. 248.
[38] Constitution, 1901, art. iii, sec. 1.
[39] Subordinate Lodge Constitution, 1912, art. iii, sec. 3.
[40] In letter to the writer.

accept them as members of the same subordinate lodge. In the first case, helpers and journeymen sit together as members of the same union at rare intervals, but in the latter case they must come together as brother members at each meeting of the local lodge. The journeymen of the more skilled handicrafts rebel at thus putting themselves on what they consider an equal social plane with the helpers. The plan of having helpers and mechanics in different local unions has accordingly tended to prevail in those trades where the mechanics for a long time opposed the organization of the helpers. As class pride has become less marked there has been a growing sentiment in favor of the abolition of separate local lodges for helpers. In the case of the Boiler Makers, as has been seen, this change in sentiment became great enough to bring about positive action in 1912. In other instances, unions which formerly absolutely prohibited helpers from gaining admission to local journeymen's unions have modified their policy so far as to admit helpers into the journeymen's lodges where conditions have not been favorable to maintaining a separate helpers' local union. For instance, in 1911 when an attempt was made to incorporate such a provision in the Machinists' constitution, there was such bitter opposition that the matter was dropped,[41] but in 1913 a referendum vote gave to helpers the privilege of conditional admission to the journeymen's lodges.[42] All unions now organizing the helpers into separate local lodges make similar provisions for organizing them with the journeymen if the conditions are unfavorable for a separate local union of helpers.

Organization of helpers and journeymen in a single body has not proved a cure for all the evils suffered by the organized journeymen in the employment of helpers. When the helpers are unorganized, friction over the work and the promotion of helpers is for the most part between the journeymen and the employers. When the helpers and the mechanics of a trade are organized within a single national

[41] Proceedings, 1911, pp. 146–147
[42] Constitution, 1913, art. i, p. 57

union, questions growing out of the use of helpers become more distinctly internal problems. One of the purposes of union journeymen in organizing helpers in association with themselves has been to control the encroachments of the helper on the trade. Much friction has developed in this connection between journeymen and helpers when organized together. The sources of difficulty have been in the main (1) the subordination of the helper to the journeyman, (2) wage scales, (3) the working of journeymen with non-union helpers and of helpers with non-union journeymen, (4) jurisdictional disputes, and (5) promotion of helpers.

(1) The subordination of helpers often begins with the issuing of a charter. It is customary for the national unions to refuse to charter a local union of helpers unless the application therefor is first approved by the local union of journeymen. Thus in the constitution prepared for machinists' helpers it is stated that "where there are sufficient numbers of helpers employed to maintain a lodge, charters shall be issued subject to the approval of the local or district lodge having jurisdiction over that locality."[43] While this requirement is designed in part to prevent the organization of lodges under unfavorable conditions, it is also intended to prevent the organization of helpers where there is lack of harmony between helpers and journeymen and where such organization would obviously promote fraternal strife.

In most instances where a national union is made up of both journeymen's and helpers' local unions the journeymen insist that the helpers' lodges shall be subordinate in some way to their own. They feel that since the helpers are under the control of the journeymen while at work, they should likewise be under their control in the organization of which both constitute a part. They also feel that since the journeymen are superior to helpers in experience and position, the mechanics should be allowed the control in matters

[43] Constitution of Machinists' Helpers Organizations, art. ii, p. 57.

of common concern to mechanics and helpers, at least in cases of last resort.

Subordination of helpers is brought about in various ways. In some cases control by the journeymen is absolute, and in other cases the helpers are restrained from independent action on important questions only. For instance, the Tile Layers in 1904 passed a resolution that tile layers' helpers should submit all demands to the tile layers' local unions in their respective cities.[44] The Machinists' constitution states that "no local of helpers shall be permitted to become involved in a strike without obtaining the sanction of the journeymen's local or district lodge under whose jurisdiction it is working and the Grand Lodge."[45] In still other cases subordination is brought about through the procedure defined for settling disputes between the two local unions. The Boiler Makers formerly provided that where a boiler makers' local division and a helpers' local division were unable to agree upon terms of employment or upon questions relating to their mutual interests, such matters should be referred to the international president, whose decision should be binding unless an appeal was taken to the executive council.[46] When cognizance is taken of the fact that the executive council at that time consisted of an international president and seven vice-presidents of whom only two were helpers,[47] it is readily seen that the journeymen had complete control over the helpers provided they saw fit to use the power which the constitution conferred upon them.

Whatever may be the specific way in which mechanics have kept or are keeping the helpers under their control, there is much friction over this policy of the journeymen, and the national conventions are usually called upon to consider the contention of the helpers for equal rights and privileges. The International Printing Pressmen and Assistants have a national board of directors which is com-

[44] Proceedings, 1904, p. 67.
[45] Constitution of Machinists' Helpers Organizations, art. v, sec. 2.
[46] Subordinate Lodge Constitution, 1908, art. xvi, sec. 17.
[47] Constitution, 1908, art. i, sec. 5; art. iv, sec. 2.

posed of a president, three vice-presidents, and a secretary-treasurer.[48] Until 1900 only one of these offices was open to the assistant pressmen,[49] much to their dissatisfaction. In the convention of 1900 an amendment was offered which provided that two of the vice-presidents should be assistant pressmen.[50] After a heated controversy the amendment passed, the assistants unanimously voting for it, while a large majority of the pressmen opposed it even though they still retained a majority of the board.

(2) The formulation of the wage scale is another source of frequent internal trouble. Both helpers and journeymen overestimate their own relative skill. The helpers contend for less, the journeymen for more difference between the wages of the two classes. In 1906 trouble developed between the steam fitters and their helpers in Philadelphia over the wages to be received by the helpers. The helpers contended for thirty cents an hour, whereas the fitters claimed that the helpers had agreed to work for twenty-four cents an hour. To this the helpers replied that it was none of the business of the fitters what the helpers received for their work. The helpers struck in an effort to secure their demands for an increased wage, but the journeymen refused to support their demands and went to work with non-union helpers.[51] Friction of this kind is especially liable to occur if piece work prevails and if helpers are paid by the journeymen, who receive from the firm the entire wage for turning out the product.

(3) A third source of controversy between helpers and mechanics is found when one party or the other works with non-unionists. As a rule there is an understanding between helpers and journeymen who are members of the same organization that members of neither class will work with non-union workmen. The enforcement of this agreement depends largely upon a third factor, the employer. If the

[48] Constitution, 1913, art. i, sec. 1.
[49] Constitution, 1899, art. ii, sec. 1.
[50] Proceedings, 1900, p. 31.
[51] Proceedings, 1906, pp. 46, 67.

union is strong in comparison with the employer, it may be carried out to the letter. If the union is too weak to cope with the employer, the agreement between helpers and journeymen is likely to be broken. In such event the group that suffers is likely to accuse the other of disloyalty. The extent of disputes of this kind is indicated in the action of the Steam Fitters. At the convention of 1897 a committee was appointed to draw up a resolution which would tend to create a more harmonious feeling between the fitters and the helpers. The chief recommendation of this committee was that the clause of the constitution with reference to fining fitters for working with non-union helpers and helpers for working with non-union journeymen be strictly enforced.[52]

(4) Jurisdictional disputes between helpers and journeymen are of two kinds, disputes over work and over workmen. There is continual complaint in most trades in which helpers are employed that the helpers are allowed to encroach upon the work of the journeymen. When journeymen and helpers are members of separate local unions but are under the same national jurisdiction, jurisdictional disputes of this kind are likely to occur. Especially is this true if the use of helpers is the result of the advantages of division of labor rather than of physical necessity. If there are two distinct classes of laborers in a trade, there must be some line of division in their work. This line wherever it may be drawn is more or less arbitrary, and consequently affords a fruitful source of contention between journeymen and helpers. In 1906 President Corder of the Marble Workers decided a dispute between Helpers' Local Union No. 6 and the Polishers and Bed Rubbers' Local Union No. 84. The helpers had entered a protest because the polishers were doing helpers' work.[53] The practice of one class of workmen doing work which, according to union regulations, belongs to another class of workmen is illustrated by the

[52] Proceedings, 1897, p. 31.
[53] Proceedings, 1906, p. 5.

course of the marble workers in "doubling up" when helpers strike. This practice has been denounced as "both pernicious and perfidious."[54]

Sometimes jurisdictional disputes are over both the work and the workmen. The essential points in disputes of this nature are seen in the controversies between the assistants and the pressmen of the International Printing Pressmen and Assistants' Union. This union grants separate charters to local lodges of pressmen and of assistants.[55] When the web press began to supplant the flat bed press, it was obvious that to allow the unions of assistants jurisdiction over the assistants on the web presses would give them the control over the majority of the workmen in the web press rooms. The reason for this is that all the workmen on a web press except one or two are assistants in the sense that they work under others who have charge of the press. Consequently, the local unions of pressmen began to extend their jurisdiction over the assistants on the web presses. The assistants objected to this policy, and for years a large part of the time at the national conventions was taken up with this question. For instance, in 1899 the Franklin Association No. 23 entered a protest because the Adams Cylinder and Press Printers No. 51 assumed jurisdiction over the web press assistants.[56] They based their protests "on the grounds that the receipt of these assistants by a pressmen's union is unconstitutional, for they are, on the average, incompetent pressmen, and not receiving the pressmen's scale of wages, and that in cases where they are, as, for instance, in New York, the pressmen's organization have lowered their scale so as to steal them." They further claimed that "in every city where there is no web press assistants' organization, they are always affiliated with the assistants' union."[57] They deemed "the action of No. 51

[54] The Marble Worker, June, 1911, p. 123.
[55] Charters are now granted to various classes of workmen (Constitution, 1913, art. 1).
[56] Proceedings, 1899, pp. 45–119.
[57] Ibid., p. 46.

in assuming jurisdiction over web press assistants a flagrant violation of not only the constitution, but of our rights."[58]

The pressmen justified the extension of their jurisdiction mainly by three arguments. In the first place, competency rather than the nature of the position held should determine a man's eligibility for membership in the pressmen's union. The so-called assistant pressmen were men who had had four or more years' experience in press-rooms and were competent pressmen, though they were working under another man who had charge of the press. Then, the attempt to distinguish assistants from pressmen on the basis of the position held at any given time would be impracticable. Inasmuch as a man may be in charge of a press one week and the next week hold a subordinate position, the plan of determining to what local union he should belong according to the kind of job he held would mean endless confusion because of the changing of members from the assistants' union to the pressmen's union and vice versa. The true doctrine should be, once a pressman always a pressman. Lastly, the pressmen's union should have jurisdiction over all workmen in a web press-room, otherwise there would be trouble because the different local lodges would have men working on the same presses.

In order to settle the dispute between the pressmen and the assistants on this point the following resolution was offered: "In accordance with the law as laid down by our International constitution and by-laws, the pressmen have only jurisdiction over pressmen; therefore, be it resolved, That that part of the constitution of No. 51 which applies to a scale for assistant pressmen be stricken out."[59] This resolution passed the convention,[60] but on reconsideration was lost,[61] and the convention closed without any definite action. Year after year the contest over the pressmen's assistants waxed warmer and warmer, completely over-

[58] Proceedings, 1899, p. 46.
[59] Ibid., p. 102.
[60] Ibid., p. 105.
[61] Ibid., pp. 114–118.

shadowing all other questions, but remaining without final settlement.

At the convention in 1904 an amendment to the constitution was proposed by a delegate from Local Union No. 23 of New York to the effect that "fly boys" and carriers in newspaper offices should be members of the assistants' union.[62] In many localities these workmen were not organized at all, and the assistants urged their claims on the ground that all the workmen in a press-room should be organized, and that since the fly boys and carriers were not eligible for membership in the pressmen's union, it was the duty of the feeders and the assistants to organize them. The pressmen did not claim that the workmen concerning whom there was a dispute were capable of taking charge of a press; with this exception the grounds on which they opposed the resolution were exactly the same as those on which they had opposed the jurisdiction of the assistants' unions over the web press assistants. It was asserted that many pressmen had, on account of disability, been forced into low-grade work and that it would not be fair to force them back into the assistants' union. While the majority of the paper handlers were not eligible for membership in the pressmen's union, it was urged that such laborers ought to be under the jurisdiction of the pressmen with whom they worked rather than under the jurisdiction of a body composed for the most part of those who worked in an altogether different kind of press-room. This amendment was lost and the struggle continued.

At present the international constitution provides that "all members of Subordinate Unions employed on rotary webb presses, on book and magazine work, in the jurisdiction of local pressmen's unions as brakemen, tension men, oilers, assistants and so-called assistants shall identify themselves with the local assistants' unions in whose jurisdiction they are working;"[63] also, that "the Assistants' Union shall

[62] Proceedings, 1899, p. 19.
[63] Constitution and By-laws, sec. 39.

have the right to organize all help working in web press-rooms for whom the Pressmen's Union have not provided a scale."[64]

(5) A question of even more concern than jurisdiction to the mechanics and helpers of a trade who are members of the same national body but in different local unions is the promotion of the helper to work known as mechanic's work and his transfer from the helpers' local union to that of the journeymen. As previously stated, it appears inconsistent for a national union pledged to the welfare of all its members to organize helpers and at the same time deny them promotion when the employers are willing to pay them mechanics' wages. In consequence, most unions have made some concessions when organizing helpers by granting them the privilege of having all or part of the journeymen's apprentices come from their ranks, or else have made the helpers apprentices in the sense that they recognize them as learners of the trade.

In a few instances, however, unions have organized the helpers without any provision for their future advancement either in work or in promotion to the journeymen's local unions. Thus in 1911, when the Machinists decided to organize the machinists' helpers under the jurisdiction of the International Association of Machinists, it was stated that "no helper can be advanced in the trade to the detriment of journeymen machinists or apprentices." One of the declared aims of the Machinists has been "to endeavor to secure the establishment of a legal apprenticeship of four years."[65] By an amendment to the Machinists' constitution of 1913 it was, however, provided that one half of all apprentices might be taken from the ranks of the helpers affiliated with the International Association of Machinists.[66]

[64] Constitution, 1913, By-laws, art. iii, sec. 3.

[65] Constitution, 1911, p. 3.

[66] This amendment reads as follows: "However a machinists helper, who has been a member of the International Association of Machinists' Helpers for two years in continuous good standing and has worked as a machinists' helper for two years in the shop where he desires to become an apprentice, and is not more than

At the present time, all of the unions, except the Marble Workers, which have made provision for the organization of helpers have some arrangement whereby there is at least a possibility that an efficient helper may become a journeyman. In most cases this possibility is so remote that the helpers are continually trying to have the national unions adopt a more liberal policy. Indeed, when helpers are formed into local unions of their own, with opportunities to develop qualities of leadership and aggressiveness, they are likely to formulate schemes for removing those constitutional restrictions upon promotion.

The struggle of helpers to remove all restrictions on their advancement is also illustrated in the history of the International Printing Pressmen and Assistants' Union. Up until 1903 the constitution of the Pressmen and Assistants provided that "no subordinate Pressmen's union shall admit to full membership any person who has not served an apprenticeship of at least four years in a press room. Rigid examination as to the competency of applicants shall be made by a committee of the local union."[67] The international constitution also provided that apprentices were "to be taken from Assistants' Unions working under the jurisdiction of the International Printing Pressmen and Assistants' Union,"[68] but as one apprentice only was to be allowed for every four journeymen, the prospects for assistants to become pressmen were not encouraging to the members of the assistants and feeders' local unions. In 1899, therefore, the Assistants pleaded for the following addition to the above clause: "Said four years in a press room as a feeder to be considered as ample time to cover apprentice laws entitling him to full membership in press-

twenty-five (25) years of age, may become a machinists' apprentice and shall serve three years as such, and be governed by the same laws and rules as govern apprentices, provided the number of apprentices taken from machinist helpers does not exceed at any time the number of regularly indentured apprentices" (Constitution, 1913, p. 57, art. i).

[67] Constitution, 1898–1903, art. xxi, sec. 4.

[68] Constitution, 1898, art. xxii, sec. 1.

men's unions when he receives the full scale of wages; he to have, at the time of admission, a paid up card of membership in the feeders and helpers' union."[69] The committee on laws reported unfavorably on the amendment, and their report was sustained.[70] This was doubtless due to the fact that the pressmen in the convention outnumbered the feeders and helpers or assistants.

It was contended by the feeders and the assistants as well as by those journeymen who favored the amendment that any member of the international union should be allowed to hold any position for which he was competent, and that when he was promoted to a pressman's position and received pressmen's wages he should be allowed membership in the pressmen's local union in his locality. Such restriction as existed was declared to be in favor of the non-union assistant or feeder, because when a man who belonged to no union secured a job as a pressman he was at once admitted to the union. It was also argued that such distinctions were purely artificial. A delegate asserted: "There is not a man in this association can define for me that line of demarcation between the gradations which exist between a feeder, an apprentice and a pressman."[71] On the other hand, the pressmen opposed the amendment on the ground that a restriction upon the promotion of the helpers was necessary for the protection of the men who had served their four years' apprenticeship.

In 1903 the constitution was changed so as to permit local pressmen's unions to regulate the number of apprentices. However, the struggle has continued, and it has been by no means a local issue. The attempts of the assistants to have the national union legislate in their behalf have not ceased, and appeals to the international union or to the international board of directors have been numerous. The gist of these local controversies and appeals can be understood from the following quotation from the president's report in 1903:—

[69] Proceedings, 1899, p. 69.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid., p. 71.

"Some of the appeals and the decisions thereon will come before this convention. Chief among them is one from Denver Pressmen's Union No. 40, appealing from my and the former Board of Directors' decision that a member of an assistants' union who has worked four years in a press room and is given the position of 'Journeyman Pressman,' is entitled to hold such position, even if the Pressmen's Union decide otherwise, or refuse to admit him to membership in the Pressmen's Union, under whose jurisdiction he may be working. This appeal as I am informed by No. 40, is not brought with any spirit of narrowness on its part, they only desiring to have the Convention decide 'whether it is wise policy' on the part of the International to allow members of assistants' union this privilege, even though such assistant does receive the scale of wages as supported by the Pressmen's Union in whose jurisdiction he may be working, and his competency vouched for by the Pressman foreman of the place where such assistant may be working, as a 'journeyman pressman.' No. 40 further contends that if such methods are allowed by the International it will not be conducive to the best interests of the Pressmen's craft in producing skilled and competent 'journeyman pressman' in line of succession. To which the board in its reply sustaining its actions points out the right of all members of the I. P. P. and A. U. under article XXVII, Sec. 2 of its International laws.[72]

"The above contention has been the cause of several of a like nature during the past year and have been decided by myself in like manner as in the case of No. 40, many of the Pressmen's Unions contending also that so long as they have members out of work, no assistant should be allowed the

[72] This law reads as follows: "A member of any Subordinate Union may work at any branch of the business; provided he shall transfer his membership and receive the consent from his union and from the union in whose jurisdiction he desires to work, and that he receives the scale of wages of said union. Should either disagree as to the competency of said applicant, he shall be allowed to work at the branch of business chosen by him pending a decision of the Board of Directors."

right of advancement. That spirit of contention on the part of some Pressmen's Unions is too narrow for the I. P. P. and A. U. to entertain, but I agree with No. 40 that it is the duty of this Convention to decide in positive terms as to where the assistants' rights begin and 'where they end.'"[73]

Two important points are to be noted in this quotation: that the decision of the board and the president was anomalous in that it allowed a workman under the jurisdiction of one branch of a union to do work under the jurisdiction of another branch, and that the president and the board of directors, of which the majority were Pressmen, favored a broad liberal policy toward the helper. It is a significant fact that in practically all unions where helpers and journeymen are organized into a single national union, the officers, whether from selfish or benevolent motives, have advocated broader policies toward the assistants than have the majority of the members of the national unions. In many instances the national leaders have championed measures designed to increase the privileges of the helpers long before the unions were brought to accept them.

In the national organizations which provide that journeymen and their helpers shall be members of the same local lodges the subordination of helpers is brought about in a different manner than in unions which have distinct local lodges for helpers and journeymen. A common rule designed to keep the helpers under the control of the journeymen is to limit the number of helpers allowed in a lodge. Thus the International Association of Elevator Constructors provides that the number of helpers shall never exceed the number of mechanics.[74] In some unions where this policy is not included in the national laws the local lodges put limitations upon the number of helpers in a lodge. For example, it is a regulation of the local union of Electrical Workers in Baltimore that "the number of helpers admitted

[73] Proceedings, 1903, p. 369.
[74] Constitution and By-laws, 1910, p. 20.

shall not exceed one to each wireman in good standing in local No. 28."[75]

It is likewise the policy of many unions to see to it that the number of helper delegates to national conventions shall never exceed the number of journeyman delegates. The Elevator Constructors provide that "locals entitled to more than one delegate may send a helper as one."[76] When this is connected with the rule that the number of helpers in the local shall never exceed the number of mechanics, it is evident that the helpers have no chance of getting control of the national convention. The jealousy with which journeymen guard their power in the national convention is illustrated by the rejection of an amendment to the constitution of the Tile Layers' Union offered in 1903, that "where local is composed of layers and helpers together sending more than one delegate to the convention, one delegate shall be a helper."[77]

In unions which have helpers and journeymen in the same local lodges, wage-scale disagreements, dissatisfaction with members and non-union members working together, jurisdictional disputes, and contentions concerning the promotion of the helper are similar in character but less tense in degree than in unions where the helpers and the journeymen are in separate local lodges. The explanation is simple. Where helpers assemble in meetings under the domination of the mechanics, they do not have the opportunities for launching movements designed for their betterment that they do when they meet in associations of their own. While the helpers may express dissatisfaction with various policies of the local of which they are a part, they do not usually succeed in crystallizing this dissatisfaction so as to bring about any unified action on their part. In fact, if the helpers so organized have grievances, about the only way they have of remedying them is by open rebellion, the suc-

[75] Constitution [no date], sec. 57.
[76] Constitution and By-laws, 1910, art. ii, sec. 4.
[77] Proceedings, 1903, p. 43.

cess of which depends largely upon their strength and importance in a trade as compared with the mechanics. Not being a distinct unit of the national organization, they have no effective way to bring local disputes before the general convention for settlement. All contentions between helpers and journeymen are thus local both in character and in the manner of their adjustment.

In a few unions like the Elevator Constructors and the Electrical Workers, which recognize the helpers as learners of their trades and which have no apprentice system between the helper and journeymanship, the difficulties of the combined organization are much less than in trades which attempt to enforce apprentice regulations by requiring the helper, if he is ever legally to become a mechanic, to pass through the intermediary state or apprenticeship period. Some unions like the Mine Workers, which are industrial in their form of organization, put helpers and journeymen on practically an equal basis and have no apprenticeship regulations. In such cases, helper problems are not present at all or exist in a very modified form.

CHAPTER IV

The Helper and Trade-Union Policy

In previous chapters, union policies concerning the helper have been set forth. We turn now to an estimate of these policies from the standpoint of economic welfare and social justice. These policies will be considered in the order pursued in the preceding chapters: (1) policies pertaining to the use of the helper; (2) policies concerning the hiring and compensation of the helper in piece-work trades; and (3) policies having to do with the organization of the helper. Of the policies of those unions which do not oppose the employment and the promotion of helpers nothing need be said. Such policies are negative rather than positive in character, and there are no points at issue between the employers and the unions as to the number and the advancement of helpers.

(1) One of the chief objections to the policy of outright restriction in the promotion of helpers is its unfairness to the helpers. Certainly it is not in keeping with democratic ideals of social justice to bar unconditionally the path of promotion against any workman. The policy of absolute restriction is open to further criticism because its enforcement undoubtedly means a decrease in the industrial efficiency of the men employed. This decrease might be brought about by destroying the stimulus to the helper which comes from the hope of promotion and thus preventing him from attaining his maximum efficiency; by removing from the journeymen the stimulating effects of competition; by preventing an efficient helper from taking the place of an inefficient journeyman or by forcing an employer to go outside of his own shop for workmen rather than promote those who are acquainted with the work of that particular shop;

and by preventing the expansion of the trade to meet legitimate social needs.

Helpers who are cut off from the hope of being elevated to the rank and work of journeymen will naturally become more dilatory in the performance of their duties. It might even be asserted that the mechanics of a trade, by being relieved of competition from their subordinate workmen, will not put forth their best efforts to become more proficient in their craft. If a helper becomes or could become a more competent worker than the more inefficient workmen in a trade, the combined efficiency of the two workmen could be increased by an exchange of their positions. It is a well-recognized principle in the industrial world that the maximum efficiency of any group of workmen in a trade or industry can best be secured if they are assigned work according to their fitness for particular tasks. This exchange of positions, it is true, would not be to the interest of those inferior workmen who are in a union and who maintain their positions because the union gives them protection. But it certainly would be better for the union as a body because in this way the most capable workmen would be kept to the front and the standard of union efficiency raised. In this connection it is important to note that the present system of specialization and diversity in the work of the different shops in the same trade often renders a helper more capable of taking a journeyman's position in the shop where he has been working than is a journeyman who has never worked in that particular shop or at that particular process.

In case of the expansion of a trade and a consequent demand for more workmen the promotion of efficient helpers will increase their productive capacity, for a skilled workman owes in a large measure his productive superiority over an unskilled workman to the fact that he is allowed to confine himself to work which requires dexterity. In short, a skilled man, in order to produce the greatest amount, must be permitted to do skilled work. The positions made vacant by the promotion of helpers competent to do journeymen's

work can be filled from the lower ranks of workmen, of whom there is always a plentiful supply. Thus the promotion of helpers to meet the demands of a trade is likely not only to increase the welfare of the helpers and to make them more productive, but it also serves as a means to relieve the congestion which usually prevails in the ranks of the less skilled workmen.

Since trade unions are usually conceded to be socially desirable, it may be contended that devices for strengthening trade unions are likewise desirable even though certain disadvantages are connected with such devices. This inference depends upon the success attained in bringing about the ends for which the device is designed. The restrictive policy of unions with respect to the promotion of helpers can hardly be defended on this score, for it has proved far from successful as a means of strengthening unionism.

In the first place, if a union opposes the promotion of helpers and closes its doors on them, they will, when opportunity offers, accept positions as non-union mechanics and in this capacity be infinitely more dangerous to organized labor than if promoted with the consent of the unions representing the trade or trades to which they belong. Even if a trade is overcrowded, it is evidently better for the union to be in control of all the workmen of the craft. In the second place, such a policy embitters the helpers against the unions and makes them eager to grasp any opportunity that gives them the upper hand of those who oppose their progress. As long as journeymen pursue such undemocratic policies they must expect that their helpers will act as strike breakers whenever opportunity presents itself.

Aside from the detriment to a union from such a policy, an opposite policy may yield positive benefits. If employers are allowed freedom in the selection of their own men, there would be a greater disinclination on the part of employers to allow a strike. If the employers have at work those whom they consider the best obtainable men for the positions of journeymen, they will not wish to run the chance of losing

them. On the other hand, if inferior workmen maintain their positions by reason of a labor monopoly while skilled helpers are forced to remain in inferior positions, employers can afford to oppose the demands of the unions, since they may count on helpers to take the places of striking journeymen.

Much has been said by union writers in opposition to the promotion of helpers on the ground that such a course tends to lower the standard of a trade. That this is merely an assigned rather than the real reason for pursuing an absolutely restrictive policy with respect to the promotion of helpers is evident, for the maintenance of the standard rate is a sufficient guarantee that inefficient helpers will not be employed as journeymen.

What we have termed a modified restrictive policy of promotion, that is, allowing a certain number of helpers to be promoted according to certain well-defined or sometimes indefinite rules, differs in degree only from the absolute restrictive policy. To the extent that helpers are prevented by artificial means from becoming mechanics, to that extent the selection of the most capable workmen is hampered; an incentive to efficiency is taken from helpers and journeymen; a hostile spirit on the part of the helpers toward the journeymen is developed, and a weakening of the bargaining power of the union is effected.

A fundamental weakness affecting all trade-union restrictions on the promotion of helpers is that they are formulated to bar the advancement of helpers rather than to test the efficiency of candidates desiring recognition as journeymen. It would seem that the only just position for any union to maintain as to the promotion of helpers is to allow such promotion freely provided employers see fit to pay the standard rate of wages for the work done.

That limitations on the promotion of helpers are not necessary for union strength and stability, and that promotion on the simple basis of merit is feasible, is abundantly confirmed by the experience of certain unions. The firemen

and brakemen are helpers, in fact if not in name, of the railway engineers and conductors respectively. The promotion of these helpers is, however, left to the employers. As a result there is no friction over the question of limitation of numbers. The Engineers and Conductors welcome into their respective organizations all who are able to do the work and receive the standard rate of pay. In other industries such as mining and the textile industries this plan is also followed. Investigations in England into industries in which journeymen are recruited from the most capable assistants without any restrictions by the union—except that the one promoted shall receive the standard wage of the position to which he has been advanced—further justify the claim that promotion of helpers on the basis of wage paid will not destroy the strength of the union. In cotton spinning the operators are recruited from the piecers, two of whom work under each spinner. Any piecer is free to become a spinner provided his employers will consent to entrust him with a pair of mules, and provided further that the piecer thus advanced to a spinner shall receive the standard wage for what he does. Notwithstanding this system of a perfectly open field for the piecers, Sidney and Beatrice Webb tell us that "the Amalgamated Association of Operative Cotton-spinners is . . . one of the strongest, most efficient, and most successful of Trade Unions. In good years and bad alike it has for a whole generation maintained the net earnings of its members at the relatively high level of from 35s. to 50s. a week."[1]

If, now, we turn from the question of promotion to the policy limiting the number of helpers or completely eliminating them, the important question is raised as to the desirability of having a journeyman or journeymen perform all the work without the aid of helpers. President Burke of the Plumbers said that the elimination of helpers in his trade was advisable even from the standpoint of the master plumbers, and that the only way for the Plumbers to settle

[1] Industrial Democracy, p. 474.

this question satisfactorily would be for them to convince the masters that it is poor economy to employ helpers at all.[2]

The great advantage claimed for the helper system is that it provides for a more economical utilization of workmen by making possible their classification according to skill and capacity. If all the work of a trade which can be divided into skilled and unskilled parts be performed by expert craftsmen, the product turned out by each will not be the maximum amount because all of the time of the skilled workman is not given to the high-grade work which he is capable of performing. If helpers are not employed, then these semi-skilled mechanics—for such are most helpers—will be forced into lower-grade work, and the product of their labor will not be so great as it would be were they allowed to do the highest grade work of which they are capable.

It might be said that the foregoing argument is convincing only if there is a scarcity of skilled mechanics, or at least no excess of them, above the number needed for performing the highly skilled parts of a trade. If this were not the case, would not semi-skilled men have work while the skilled men were idle, and would not this result in a social loss? A careful study of this question shows that a helper system of work is not likely to result in the displacement of skilled men by unskilled men. Assuming that a standard or a minimum wage is maintained for helpers just as for the journeymen of a trade, what will take place if for any reason there is an oversupply of journeymen? The answer is obvious. Since even expert mechanics are not all possessed of the same degree of skill, those who prove themselves in the eyes of the employers the most capable will be selected for the high-grade work, and the others will be left for second-grade or helpers' work. Here again, as in the case of the most skilled work, if there is an excess of workmen the most efficient will secure employment, and the residuum will be pressed further down the line until finally

[2] Interview with the writer.

the least desirable men will be forced out of the trade. That the employer will profit by engaging skilled men to do his work when the wage scale is the same per unit of efficiency for all classes is evident.

It is said that in the long run a helper system will tend to lower productive efficiency by reason of the fact that in serving as helpers, boys are often cut off from opportunities of learning a trade, and do not produce as much as they might had they never worked as helpers. It is asserted that helper positions are but blind-alley employments which in the end greatly increase the number of unskilled relative to the number of skilled workmen. The validity of this reasoning depends largely upon the efficiency of the helper system of work as a mode of learning a trade. If, as in the case of the blowing of glass bottles, much small help is employed and little opportunity is afforded them to learn the trade in which they act as assistants, there is no doubt that the boys thus employed are diverted from securing the preparation necessary to attain their possible maximum efficiency as workmen. However, these form exactly the class of helpers who have received slight attention from labor organizations, or none at all. Unions have as a rule concerned themselves only with helpers who have shown a tendency to learn a trade.

Here the helper system is criticised on the ground that it draws more men into a trade than are necessary for recruiting the trade, and hence produces one or both of the following conditions: a trade overcrowded with mechanics, or one filled with helpers or semi-skilled workmen who have little opportunity for advancement. Certainly it is clear that if the number of helpers in a trade is large—if, for example, each journeyman has a helper—and if all the helpers in the course of three or four years become expert mechanics, there would be under ordinary conditions an excess of mechanics over the number needed. In fact, however, in those trades where the helper system of entrance to a trade or position is not restricted by union rules, there is no tendency to over-

crowd a trade. In the iron and steel business, for instance, helpers are promoted gradually as vacancies occur. Promotion is in regular order, but there is no clearly defined rule as to this; yet no complaint is made by the workmen that the system tends to produce too many journeymen. What really takes place is this: If men who are at the heads of teams become for any reason incapable of filling their positions satisfactorily, there is a reclassification of workmen. Helpers and journeymen exchange places. This is better for the journeymen than to be thrown out of work. As far as the helpers are concerned, there is usually room at the top, and few are kept at unskilled positions when they prove themselves worthy of promotion.

The question is not whether two skilled men can do more than two unskilled men, but whether it is desirable, taking the best men obtainable, to have a division in their work so that some become assistants to others. In spite of the protests of the unions that the use of helpers is poor economy on the part of employers, the fact remains that the helper system is a result of the division of labor which is usually recognized as superior to the system of having one workman do all grades of work in a trade. The fact also remains that the unions have not convinced employers that it is to the advantage of an employer to eliminate helpers. If wages per efficiency unit are the same for helpers and journeymen, and employers prefer to use a certain number of helpers, the evidence is fairly conclusive that the use of helpers affords economy in production.

This consideration brings up another question with regard to the advisability of doing away with helpers. The efficiency of the system as a means of learning a trade should have much weight in any judgment on this question. The helper system has certain advantages over any other system of learning a trade. In the first place, it is favorable to the efficiency of production because of the elasticity in the supply of the product which it renders possible. This elasticity is due to the fact that more easily and more quickly

than any other plan of trade entrance the helper system permits an increase in the number of mechanics to meet the demands for labor resulting from the expansion of a shop or of a trade. By promoting a helper to a journeyman's position and by filling the vacancy thus made from unskilled or relatively unskilled workmen—of whom there is always a plentiful supply—an employer can keep his plant going, in case he loses some of his journeymen, without any great diminution of output. On the other hand, if there are no helpers in a trade and if there is in a shop a demand for mechanics above that which can be supplied from the regular apprentices, the employer will face one of two situations. Either he will not be able to supply his need, in which case his output will be greatly reduced, or he will be forced to select his mechanics from the unemployed, who are usually the less desirable men in a trade.

In the second place, since helpers are employed primarily to meet an economic need, the education they get comes as a by-product of an existing economic system. Hence the helper system affords an economical way of learning a trade. In blacksmithing, for instance, it is inconvenient and costly to provide a fire for an apprentice, who often does little more than waste material. Since it is essential that two men work together in blacksmithing, and since it is unnecessary that both these men shall be highly skilled, a helper by working hand to hand with a smith has every opportunity to learn the craft. Thus without any waste of material or time, helpers may become skilled in the trade.

If helpers be eliminated, how shall work be done which cannot be done by one man? This is a matter of importance in some trades. In plumbing, for instance, some of a helper's time is taken up in assisting the journeyman to lift and adjust heavy fixtures, work which one man cannot do by himself. Some plumbers contend that mechanics may assist each other at such work, and work independently of each other on all other work. It would obviously be poor economy to send out two high-priced mechanics to do a piece of work which one mechanic and a helper could do as well.

Undoubtedly many unsatisfactory conditions the blame for which is given to the helper system are due not to the system itself, but to the methods employed by the unions to regulate or to abolish it. Of all the trades in which the helper question has been prominent the plumbing trade has been said to show the most unsatisfactory conditions. However, Sidney and Beatrice Webb report that in England the helper system is accepted by the unions of plumbers. They say: "The employers in London do not engage boys or apprentices to assist the men in plumbing, or to learn the trade. The custom is for each plumber to be attended by an adult laborer, known as the 'plumber's mate.' Any employer is at liberty to promote a plumber's mate to be a plumber whenever he chooses, provided only that he pays him the plumber's Standard Rate. Notwithstanding the fact that the number of 'plumbers' mates,' who form the class of learners, is four or five times as numerous as would suffice to recruit the trade, the London branches of the United Operative Plumbers' Society effectively maintain a high Standard Rate."[3] Reference has been previously made to the fact that the helper system of learning the plumbing trade has been accepted by the New York plumbers. In reply to an inquiry as to the workings of the system in that city, Secretary Hopkins of Local Union Number 489 writes: "The question of the helper has never received serious consideration as we feel that with the co-operation of the Master Plumbers (with whom we are on close terms) we can control them."

(2) We have seen that three methods of employing and paying helpers have been followed: (a) The journeymen engage and pay their helpers; (b) the journeymen engage the helpers, who are paid by the employer; and (c) the employers hire and pay the helpers.

(a) The policy of the unions in permitting if not in advocating the employment and the payment of helpers by the journeymen is not conducive to the organization of help-

[3] P. 475.

ers in unions with the journeymen. The journeymen potters, for instance, do not object to taking helpers into their union, but the various classes of helpers in the pottery industry have not availed themselves of the privileges granted to them in this respect. The helpers do not care to be organized in the same unions with their employers.

In trades or industries where the journeymen hire and pay helpers the journeymen are frequently not consistent in their attitude toward collective bargaining. For instance, the Potters in agreement with the firms establish a wage scale. As employees the journeymen potters certainly think it fair and just that they, collectively, shall have a voice in fixing wages. However, as employers, the journeymen attempt to fix the wages of helpers. In the days of the United Sons of Vulcan, when the helpers were paid directly by the journeymen, it was the policy of the union, in which helpers were not then included, to establish a uniform rate of pay for helpers.[4]

(b) The present rule of the Iron, Steel and Tin Workers is that journeymen shall employ their own help, despite the fact that it is the policy of the union to have all helpers paid from the office of the firms.[5] At first thought this policy may seem unfair to the employers; but when consideration is given to the fact that in iron, steel and tin mills work is usually paid for by the piece or by the turn and that the piece wage includes the wages of both journeymen and helpers, it is readily seen that this method of hiring and paying helpers should ordinarily be satisfactory to the firms. In the first place, so much is paid for the work turned out, and it is immaterial to the firms whether the entire amount be paid to the heads of the various teams or to the individual workmen. In the second place, since journeymen must have help to do their work, and since their product and consequently their wages depend upon the efficiency of the help employed, the hiring of the help by the individual jour-

[4] Proceedings, 1875, p. 58.
[5] Constitution, 1912, art. xvii, sec. 21.

neymen shifts responsibility from the firms to the heads of the various teams.

(c) The policy of unions of allowing the firms to employ and pay all helpers would appear at first thought to be the fairest plan of all to those directly concerned. Since, however, the output of a journeyman is largely dependent upon the work of his helper or helpers, this method at times may be a source of friction between a journeyman and his employer. Reference was made at the eighth annual convention of the National Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers to trouble in the Tubal Cain Lodge growing out of the furnishing of unsatisfactory help by an employer.[6] The product turned out was not up to the standard, and the boiler maker blamed the helper for the defective work. Obviously, if a boiler maker hires his own help, there is no shifting of the responsibility for unsatisfactory work. The boilermaker becomes responsible for the work of both himself and his helper.

In industries, however, where it is possible to separate the work of the mechanics and the helpers so that each will have definite duties, hiring and payment by the employer become possible, because it is not necessary that the piece prices shall include all the work of turning out the finished product. The jiggerman in the pottery trade could get a piece wage for the work done by himself just as well as he could for the work of himself and all his helpers. Even in cases of this kind, however, it is usually more satisfactory for journeymen to engage their own helpers, for they can act as overseers of helpers and at the same time do their own work effectively.

(3) From the standpoint of social interest the policy of excluding helpers from union membership can be briefly estimated. It is generally admitted to be socially beneficial for laborers of all classes to be organized. This being true, the question arises as to what should be the relation of organized helpers to organized journeymen in order to

[6] Proceedings, 1883, p. 1170.

secure the most stable and efficient form of organization for all concerned.

With two exceptions, organizations of helpers not affiliated with journeymen's organizations or with the American Federation of Labor have not flourished. In the main this is due to the lack of initiative and executive ability on the part of helpers. The exceptions are the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and the Brotherhood of Stationary Firemen. The members of these unions are of a higher type than most helpers, and for this reason they have been able of their own accord to maintain prosperous organizations. As stated in a previous chapter, no national organization of helpers representing only a single trade as distinguished from an industry has ever been chartered by the American Federation of Labor. The Federation has evidently acted wisely in not encouraging such organizations, for their existence would mean endless jurisdictional disputes with the journeymen's unions. It appears, therefore, that if helpers specialized in a particular trade are ever to be successfully organized they must be allowed to organize in conjunction with the journeymen of their respective trades.

It has not been possible to estimate with exactness the success which organized journeymen have met with in their efforts to organize the helpers in their trades, but from the information at hand it is safe to state that helpers as a rule do not seem to be attracted by the privilege of membership in journeymen's unions. Helpers about potteries and iron, steel and tin plants, according to information obtained from the secretaries of the unions in these industries, are not as a rule members of the union. This is no doubt due in large measure to the fact that journeymen are the employers of the helpers. Secretary Hogan of the Marble Workers writes as follows: "We have had an average membership of helpers of about thirty per year in the past ten years. One year, 1910, we took in about one hundred and fifty in the different locals. The helper in our industry is not

favored with steady work the year around, therefore, there is very little inducement for him to join our organization, in many cases preferring to work on a privilege without making application to the organization."[7] The disinclination of marble workers' helpers to join the International Association of Marble Workers is doubtless due in part to the fact that the association is opposed to the promotion of helpers. The helpers feel that they have a better chance for promotion out of the union than they have in it. A delegate to the Printing Pressmen's Convention said, with reference to the promotion of helpers in the printing business, that when a man who does not belong to a union gets a job, he is taken in, and he asked if a man should be refused the privilege of promotion because he is a loyal union assistant.[8]

In very few of the unions which have made provision for admitting helpers to membership and have also some provision for promoting helpers to journeymen are the helpers given rights and privileges sufficient to draw them into the union. Few helpers want to join a union which stipulates that no helper can be advanced in the trade to the detriment of journeymen or apprentices.[9] For instance, a boiler maker's helper, discussing the rights of the helpers to hold office in the Brotherhood of Boiler Makers, said if there was so much opposition to helpers holding office, he for one did not want to be taken in with the boiler makers.[10]

The failure, or at least the lack of success, of the unions in their efforts to organize the helpers is due chiefly to the efforts of journeymen to restrict the promotion of helpers and secondarily to the opposing views of helpers and journeymen as to what should be the rights and privileges of helpers as union members. If helpers in large numbers ever come into the unions and work in harmony with the journeymen, these differences of opinion must in some way

[7] In letter to the writer.
[8] Proceedings, 1899, p. 69.
[9] Constitution to Govern Machinists' Helpers, 1911, art. i.
[10] Proceedings, 1912, p. 128.

be diminished. The welfare of the crafts would seem to demand that journeymen should retain control in their respective unions. Otherwise, if helpers should in any case have a majority of members in a union, their eagerness for increased wages and rapid promotion might work harm to the union. On the other hand, fairness to helpers and social interest demand that all limitations upon the promotion of helpers, other than the ability to command the standard wage, should be abolished. This would take away from helpers the belief that limitations on their rights and privileges as union members are mainly for the purpose of retarding their advancement. It is not likely that helpers would refuse to join a union merely because they did not have the same rights as journeymen provided there were no arbitrary restrictions to keep them from becoming journeymen.

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